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ABSTRACT

The Public Relations section of the Proceedings contains the following 15 papers: "The World Wide Web as a Public Relations Medium: The Use of Research, Planning, and Evaluation by Web Site Decision-Makers" (Candace White and Niranjan Raman); "Enlightened Self Interest--An Ethical Baseline for Teaching Corporate Public Relations" (Patricia T. Whalen); "Public Relations' Potential Contribution to Effective Healthcare Management" (Chandra Grosse Gordon and Kathleen S. Kelly); "Paychex PR: Does It Contradict the Excellence Study?" (Andrea C. Martino); "Exploring an IMC Evaluation Model: The Integration of Public Relations and Advertising Effects" (Yungwook Kim); "Public Relations and the Web: Measuring the Effect of Interactivity, Information, and Access to Information in Web Sites" (Michelle O'Malley and Tracy Irani); "Conflict Resolution: The Relationship between Air Force Public Affairs and Legal Functions" (James William Law); "Organizations and Public Relations: Institutional Isomorphism" (Hyun Seung Jin); "No, Virginia, It's Not True What They Say about Publicity's 'Implied Third-Party Endorsement' Effect" (Kirk Hallahan); "Searching for Excellence in Public Relations: An Analysis of the Public Relations Efforts of Five Forestry Companies in the U.S." (Kimberly Gill); "Fess Up or Stonewall? An Experimental Test of Prior Reputation and Response Style in the Face of Negative News Coverage" (Lisa Lyon and Glen T. Cameron); "Learning to Swim Skillfully in Uncharted Waters: Doris E. Fleischman, 1913-1922" (Susan Henry); "High Tech vs. High Concepts: A Survey of Technology Integration in U.S. Public Relations Curricula" (Patricia A. Curtin, Elizabeth M. Witherspoon, and Dulcie M. Straughan); "Women in the Public Relations Trade Press: A Content Analysis of 'Tide' and 'Public Relations Journal' (1940s through 1960s)" (Patricia Curtin and Karen S. Miller); and "Teaching Public Relations Campaigns: The Current State of the Art" (Vincent L. Benigni and Glen T. Cameron). (CR)

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**The World Wide Web as a Public Relations Medium:
The Use of Research, Planning, and Evaluation
by Web Site Decision-Makers**

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**The World Wide Web as a Public Relations Medium:
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Abstract

The World Wide Web is viewed as a new medium for public relations by many organizations. Given the evolving nature of the Web and the mixed findings about commercial successes of Web sites, little is known about the managerial aspects of Web site research, planning, and evaluation. This study found that in many cases, Web site planning is done by trial and error based on subjective knowledge and intuition, with little to no formal research and evaluation.

Introduction

The World Wide Web can be considered the first public relations mass medium in that it allows managed communication directly between organizations and audiences without the gatekeeping function of other mass media; content is not filtered by journalists and editors. Indeed, Edelman Public Relations Worldwide touts the Web as an ideal public relations medium (Gleason, 1997). It is a unique medium that affords new opportunities for organizations to reach and interact with stakeholders.

Cross (1994) points out that businesses use the Web for not only advertising and marketing activities, but also to obtain feedback and improve public relations. Alba et al. (1997) theorize how electronic marketplaces might function and explore consumers, retailers, and manufacturers' motivations for playing an active role in such environments. Johnson (1997) notes that public relations practitioners use the Web to facilitate media relations, for employee communication, and government and investor relations as well as for customer and consumer relations.

However, most academic research to date has focused on the "first-level effects" of the technology, defined by Sproull and Kiesler (1991) as the anticipated or potential

efficiency effects of the technology itself. Likewise, professional seminars proliferate that advise organizations *how* to create a Web site, but few communication professionals are asking *why*. A review of articles from September 1994 to the present in Public Relations Tactics, a newsletter published by the Public Relations Society of America, found most articles about the World Wide Web fit into the following categories: designing and creating Web sites, media relations (posting and disseminating news releases, source-reporter relations, setting up media centers for crisis communication), publicizing web sites, and using the Web (to monitor competition, public opinion, news sites). Articles about setting up Web sites focused on design considerations, links and navigation, and software. Professional trade journals in advertising and marketing also focus primarily on the technological capabilities. (Computerworld [Seybold, 1996], however, cautions companies not to allow corporate public relations departments to control Web sites lest they become boring corporate brochures.)

Marken (1995) advocates strategic thinking for creating Web sites and calls the Web the perfect channel for educating, informing and persuading organizations' diverse audiences, but focuses on site design. When the term "planning" is used in most articles about the Web, it refers to planning what the site should look like and who will maintain it. This perspective does not take into account the needs of the audience with whom the organization wishes to communicate. In fact, most articles *assume* there is an audience ready and waiting. However, it must be recognized that the audiences for many organizations do not fit the profile of Web users, a fact that is often overlooked particularly by those in corporate and academic settings where Web access is common.

CommerceNet/Nielsen Media Research (1997) reports nearly 23 percent of about 220 million individuals over the age of 16 in the U.S. and Canada use the Internet. About 37 million individuals or 17 percent are Web users. While this number increases daily, it is still only a small portion of the public of most organizations.

Research, planning, and evaluation

The direct link between research, planning and evaluation and achieving effective public relations outcomes is well-documented (Broom and Dozier, 1990; Dozier and Ehling 1992; Kendall, 1996; Wilcox, Ault, and Agee, 1997). In a typical public relations planning process, formative research is conducted to define the problem clearly and to define publics or target markets. Objectives specify desired outcome, identify target audiences and state an expected level of attainment (Kendall, 1996). This step is followed by the formulation of message strategy and message testing before any communication is implemented. Gronstedt (1997) advocates an "outside-in" approach to planning which considers the behavioral and communication objectives of the audience and the "personal media network" for the target audience. Evaluative research is conducted after the communication campaign is executed (Wilcox et al. 1997). A similar exercise is followed for marketing and advertising. A budgeting exercise considering competition, objectives, and resources is conducted and a media plan and creative strategy are mapped out. A mechanism for assessing effectiveness of the program is also planned (Batra, Myers and Aaker 1996).

With the Web becoming an important medium to reach stakeholders, it would seem apparent that Web site creation would follow a detailed and organized planning

effort equal to if not more than traditional communications planning. Thus we would expect that Web site creation would entail careful consumer research, clear defining of the objectives of the Web site, and on-going research to continuously refine the Web site given its importance to many organizations.

In practice, however, even when using traditional communication channels, thorough planning and evaluation processes are not always carried out. Lindenmann (1990) found that even though public relations practitioners believe research and evaluation are necessary, most practitioners talk about it more than actually do it. Hon (1997) also found that planning and evaluation are often constrained by lack of resources and by the difficulty of the tasks, even when their value is acknowledged.

The World Wide Web is a unique medium, not only terms of electronic digital delivery but because it emerged quickly and changes constantly. The media hype about the Web has created a gold rush mentality - organizations are rushing to establish an "Internet presence." Many public relations practitioners who usually would not create messages without a researched-based target are rushing to get on-line, and may not be asking the basic questions they would consider when using traditional media: What do we wish to accomplish? Whom do we need to reach? A desire to keep up with new communication technology should not supersede the rational decision-making process that most organizations would apply to communication through traditional media. While the Web has unprecedented capabilities - asynchronicity, a continuous presence, reach to a mass audience without gatekeeping restraints - and has acquired a mystical and ethereal characterization, it is at a very basic level, another communication medium. As with any

other medium, there needs to be objectives and planning for the communication transmitted via Web sites.

This research studies these issues by examining managerial objectives of creating and managing Web sites, and explores the impetus behind the dash to get on-line. The study was conducted to obtain a snapshot of the current level of Web site research, planning, and evaluation done by organizations.

Method

A qualitative method was employed in this study since qualitative approaches are preferable in exploratory research where the goal is to understand a process or phenomenon. Structured interviews were conducted to examine actual practices of Web site decision-makers. A copy of the interview guide is included in the Appendix.

Respondents were selected using a random procedure. A World Wide Web "yellow page" directory Web Bound (1997), consisting of over 25,000 Web site addresses was used to select a sample of 60 Web sites. The researchers talked by telephone with the editor of this publication to determine how Web sites were chosen for inclusion in the directory. The editor chose categories of products and services he believed had relevance to a large audience. More than 400 categories were tracked on the major search engines like Yahoo, Web Crawler, InfoSeek, and Lycos. The editor then sorted out the Web sites in each category that appeared to have a broad base of interest, and eliminated those that did not have upper level domain addresses since his readership research indicated readers want reliable, shorter addresses. The editor made an arbitrary selection of sites for each

category, weeding out sites that were narrow in focus and making each category in the directory proportionate to the size of the category on the search engines.

About 160 addresses were listed on each page from pages 19 to 144. A computer program was used to generate a random list of numbers from 1-160. These numbers were then used to select the sample of Web site addresses from every odd numbered page. If the random number did not fall on a commercial domain (.com), the next number from the list was chosen. This procedure resulted in a pool of 60 Web site addresses which included corporations, small and large businesses, non-profit organizations, and the Web site of a metropolitan newspaper. (Table 1).

Twenty-two "Web site decision-makers" from the pool of 60 Web sites were the respondents for this study. A Web site decision-maker (WDM) is defined as a manager who has responsibility for planning the content and format of the Web site. In contrast, a Webmaster maintains the Web site. In some cases, these roles may be assumed by one person. To ensure that respondents in this study were WDMs, the sample was screened with the following questions: "Who is responsible for decisions involving planning of your Web site?" and "Who maintains the Web site?"

Telephone interviews were conducted over a three-week period. The interviews averaged 30 minutes each and were tape-recorded. After 22 interviews were completed, it was apparent that little new information was forthcoming. Marshall and Rossman (1989) note that sample size in qualitative research is less important than repetition of themes among respondents. McCracken (1988) suggests that iteration generally occurs somewhere between 8 and 20 interviews.

Using inductive qualitative analysis, interview data were analyzed using a technique described by Corbin and Strauss (1990) which prescribes linking and relating sub-categories by denoting conditions, context, strategies and consequences. The interview tapes were transcribed onto note cards, with each note card indicating the name of the Web site and containing a single idea or unit of information (open coding). Units of information which were redundant or not relevant to the study were discarded, leaving nearly 200 cards which were sorted into categories through a method of constant comparison and evaluation of ideas (axial coding). Finally, the categories were examined to determine how they related to one another and what central themes or ideas emerged (selective coding). (Table 2)

Categorical Responses to Interview Questions

Since this research explores new ground, an aggregate of the responses to the principal interview questions is provided. Understanding the thoughts behind the creation of Web sites in this sample may provide insight into better planning and execution of sites in the future.

Decision-making process

In almost all the organizations in the study, the decision to develop a Web site was made by one person, usually the CEO or marketing manager. Most often this was a result of a personal interest in the Internet on the part of the WDM. In a few cases, the WDM was approached by a Web developer outside the company and "sold" on the idea of a Web

site. The formal position of the WDM within the organization varied greatly, but no WDM in the sample had the term "public relations" in his or her job title.

A frequent factor in the decision-making process was a combination of a belief that the Internet is the way of the future and a fear of being left behind by competitors. This can be seen in the following statements.

Why? Peer pressure. It became apparent to us that it was the place to be, the up-and-coming thing.

We thought other people were starting to do this (create Web sites) and we needed to get our name out there before it was too late.

We knew there was a lot of potential there and it was the way a lot of businesses were going to be going.

One organization made the decision to develop a Web site because "our customers started asking us if we have a Web site." It is interesting to note this site had been operational for the shortest period of time compared to the rest of the Web sites in the sample (Table 1). This implies that customers expect organizations to have a Web site by this point in time.

Purpose of Web sites

The most often-stated purposes for a Web site were to provide information, for advertising and marketing, and for customer communication and feedback (e-mail). One WDM specifically stated that the site was created for public relations. A few sites were

for on-line retailing - two in the sample were on-line storefronts with no physical facilities; entertainment was mentioned only twice.

Content of Web sites usually consisted of written or printed material from brochures, advertising and/or existing annual and quarterly reports which were already available. Content was changed when the WDM "felt like there was something new to add."

Research

None of WDMs in this sample conducted formal research before launching their Web site. Only three were conducting any formal on-going research. Before creating the site, they browsed the Web and looked at other Web sites, read trade magazines about Web sites and software, and talked to friends and co-workers about what they liked or didn't like. Decisions were usually made based on the WDM's personal preferences, copying what he or she liked about other sites, or were left up to the outsourced Web consultant. Terms such as gut feeling, common sense, and seat of my pants were frequently used to describe the "research" process. A respondent sums this:

I don't know why I did what I did. We slap it on the wall and see if it sticks.

Three organizations used brainstorming committees before creating their sites. Committee members asked one another questions such as, "What does a person need to know to understand us?" One of these committees had written objectives that were faxed to the researchers. However, not a single one of the 22 organizations conducted research about their consumers regarding the Internet *prior* to creating their site.

On-going evaluative research is equally informal. The buzzwords here were: trial and error, work in progress, and ever-evolving. Many WDMs realized they should be conducting more formalized research, but were uncertain how to go about it. Most measure and/or track hits, look at email to get feedback from customers, and keep an eye on the sites of their competitors. A few make sure their site comes up on the search engines, making key word changes if necessary. Some say they do nothing but modify the site when something changes in the organization. Most admit they do not know if their site is effective. Some interesting responses were elicited by the question, "Are you conducting any on-going research about your Web site?"

Yeah, I attended a technology trade show to look at new stuff.

I don't know what you mean by that. [Interviewer explains the question] We don't talk to consumers. We are not doing any focus groups or anything like that.

Our method is to fly by the seat of the pants and change as needed based on my perception.

We copy the big guys and look at trends. They're the ones that spend the bucks on research.

Only three organizations had conducted formal on-going research. One used an on-line survey; the other two included information that would be useful for the Web site on business-wide surveys.

Target audiences

Most WDMs could identify the target publics of their organization, but admitted they had no way of knowing if they were reaching their audience through their Web site, as is seen in the following response.

We target the corporate pilot with the Internet in his hangar. We have no idea how many that would be.

Most WDMs said their Web site was intended to reach "anybody and everybody," or "anyone surfing the net," and "baby boomers." Three mentioned that a Web site was the most effective way to reach an international market.

Some target publics seemed incongruent with the profile of typical Web users.

Consider the following descriptions:

We serve rural areas of Alabama. Our population is older, so you won't find complicated things on our Web site because our customers many not be computer literate.

One of the problems is that body builders [this organization's primary target market] are not known to be real computer literate.

Cost effectiveness

Many WDMs mentioned that Web sites are an economical means to reach customers and an inexpensive way to advertise. Costs of Web sites varied. The most expensive site, that of a metropolitan newspaper, cost more than \$300,000 a year; others pay under \$500 a year to an Internet service provider.

Seventeen of the 22 WDMs said their Web site was cost effective. For one, a religious diocese, profit was not an issue; only one said he had no way to measure. All of the three WDMs who said their organization's Web site was not cost effective, believed it would be in the near future:

Cost effective? Not right now. The object at this time is to have a presence. It is necessary evil until we can get around to putting it the way we want it, then I believe, have a gut feeling, it will be cost effective in the future.

Right now I would have to say no. But give it another six months and I think we are going to have more hits. Eventually we will break even, if not make a profit.

At this point, no. Our goal is that it will be in the future as we update and expand it...at that time it will be cost effective.

Many of the comments of the 17 WDMs who answered yes to this question indicated they understood the term cost effective to mean economical or valuable, rather than profitable.

Cost effective? Yes, compared to the cost of print or magazine ads.

Absolutely, if only in terms of perception.

Yes, because we are spending little for it and are able to reach a lot of people.

When asked *how* they knew their site was cost effective, most admitted they had no data; a few qualified their previous positive response.

Yes it's cost effective. I am providing an amazing site for one person. I admit my revenues don't offset the costs... but the pay off is down the road.

Oh yes, it's been very cost effective. We actually made a profit...well no, I can't say that we made a profit last year. Let me retract that.

If you look at straight dollars, it's probably a trade off. If you look at PR its probably worth it.

Only three WDMs had hard data to show their site was cost effective. One is an electronic mall (an on-line business), the second is a real estate company, and the third is an on-line clearinghouse for retirement communities. The retirement site has been linked to 200 other sites, sells banner ads, and charges retirement communities a fee to be described on the site. Their profit is not coming from the senior citizen consumer, but from marketing to other businesses. It seems apparent that the nature of the business is a factor in cost effectiveness.

Emergent Themes

All units of information, including responses to the questions above, responses to other questions, and unsolicited or off-the-subject comments were compared and contrasted and sorted into thematic categories. Each category was examined for redundancy and checked to see that the units in the category "loaded" together. Each theme was given a name.

Competition

"The World Wide Web is successful because it is based on people's natural emotions including fear, greed and vanity,"

**- Eric Schmidt, VP of Technology, Sun Microsystems,
(Newsweek, Dec. 25, 1995, p. 27).**

There was evidence of competitiveness in almost every question category. Most WDMs said they built sites to stay competitive, as is evident in the following response: "Why? Because other newspapers had one and we feared electronic competition." A reference to being competitive, staying ahead of competition, or fear of competition occurred in all 22 interviews. Interestingly, even the WDM for the Web site of the religious diocese mentioned competition, noting that other religions had Web sites. The attitude here seems to be, "he has one, so I want one."

We wanted to have one because everyone else had one. Our competition started getting on the Web and we had to follow.

We look at what other people do for the sake of keeping up. We want to give people what they want so they enjoy the experience. We don't want to fall behind.

The Internet is like a store front for world business. If you're not there, you're not even close to doing business this day and age.

Hedge against the future

Closely related to competition, and nearly as frequently mentioned, was the idea of creating Web sites as a hedge against the future. While many respondents expressed doubt about reaching their target markets or turning profits on the Internet at the present time, they still believed this was the way of the future. Some viewed their site as a "place holder." One WDM noted, "It's like entering into the world yellow pages of the future."

Other comments:

The reason we are maintaining it is for the future, to keep the presence up.

The potential is there so when we're ready to more aggressively market the Web site, we're not going to have to re-invent the wheel. It is an up-front investment that is not maxed out as far as our business is concerned.

As computers get easier to use and there are more computers around, you'll have more people who use the net. It is a hedge against the future.

Creating an Internet presence

A more ethereal purpose of Web sites is, in the words of one respondent, "strictly to have a presence on the Web." Another said, "We established our site to have an Internet presence." Many made comments such as "it is a good place to put our presence," in addition to their more concrete purposes.

Creating a Web site is like saying I'm going to open a store. You hang out a shingle by being on the Internet. It's almost like having a business card there.

This is our first year -- we said let's create a presence. In the coming year we'll probably figure out what we want to do with it.

Web sites as status symbols

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was the concept that having a Web site is, in a sense, a status symbol for the organization. A Web site is perceived as evidence that an organization has the latest bells and whistles in technology and serves as a sort of vanity press.

Having a Web site is one of those trendy things corporations do now. You need to have a Web site, if for nothing else, just to say you have one.

Frequently it's an ego trip for the owner or manager of the company to be able to say yes, we have a Web site.

Almost everyone has it. It's hard to meet someone who hasn't been there -- on the net.

Image building

In addition to providing status to an organization, WDMs believe their Web site projects the image they want their organization to portray. A few mentioned they use the site to position their company as a leader in all areas, including technology. Others mentioned the use of Web sites for public relations and credibility.

We have a theory that if we project an image of being on the leading edge in anything in technology, clients believe you're on the leading edge of everything. Our members want us to be right up there with the best, and if we're not there, that says to them maybe they shouldn't leave their money with us.

Our object is exposure...to show that we're sort of a modern company, that we have the latest marketing outlet. Sales would be great, but I can't say we're accomplishing that.

A Web site provides a proactive image of being in step with technology.

Monetarily it is break-even, but it gets us out there...promotes good will.

Dynamic, evolutionary process

Web site decision-makers admitted that much of what they did was based on intuition and their own assessment of what was working. This is understandable since the

technology is rapidly changing and evolving, and tried and true planning tools are not yet available. Another theme throughout the interviews was the dynamic nature of the Web.

We hoped we would have sales, but it's not working that way. Instead they (customers) are calling and saying, I saw your Web site, using it as a brochure.

It has to be evolving, can't remain stagnant, and has to be continually changing. It is a mirror image of what goes on inside our firm.

It was designed as a communications tool, but what has happened is people look at our site and it establishes a credibility level for our company.

There will be much more effective use, but this is a way to introduce them at the ground floor.

As mentioned earlier, WDMs believe their sites will be more useful to their organization at some future date. This is due in part to the belief that eventually they will figure out its usefulness. An aspect of the evolutionary process is an attempt to make the Web site "work" for the company. Many WDMs were looking for ways to make their site more functional.

We need a working Web site versus an information site. This is the struggle. It is a live medium, always changing. You always have to work on it.

We provide rates, but want to clients to be able to do on-line transactions.

We want to put specification; etc. on it and customers can get them without us having to FedEx it.

Cynical realism

A small thread of cynical realism also ran through the interviews. It must be noted that the overwhelming attitude toward the Web was one of awe - a Web site is a must to have. The interesting thing about the following comments is that in many cases, the comment directly contradicted something the respondent said in a different part of the interview. The comment below is from a WDM who said earlier that his site was cost effective and that he put it up to be competitive.

It's an ego thing. Your really don't need it and it's completely useless. It's just another medium for advertising.

You can have the greatest Web site in the world, but unless people visit it, it's like putting a \$3,000 billboard in the middle of the woods.

I am very critical of reasons many organizations put up Web sites. I don't think it's defined. I don't think they have defined outcome expectations. I don't think they have any way of evaluating the results.

I don't think Internet commerce has taken off like we would have expected it to by now. I believe it will in the next 2-3 years. The key will be Web TV. When every household in America has access to the Internet, it will take off like crazy.

The only people making money on the Internet are the people building sites or people selling sex.

These comments ring true, and show that at some level, WDMs recognize the weaknesses as well as strengths of the Internet, even if at this time it is almost taboo to admit them.

Conclusion

This research provides preliminary evidence that in the haste to take advantage of the Web and to establish an Internet presence, the basic tenets of public relations research, planning, and evaluation are often ignored. Findings of the study indicate that Web site planning is done by trial and error, based on intuition, with little to no formal research. In the absence of Web planning tools, it is not surprising that much Web site creation is purely experimental. The results also indicate what WDMs know: nothing concrete about building effective Web sites. In fact, several of the 60 sites in the sample contained no contact numbers nor mailing or email addresses - the most elemental piece of information.

However, WDMs have many beliefs, even if they are unsupported by empirical knowledge. They believe that Web sites are the way of the future. They believe that Web sites are cost-effective even though they lack support for this belief. A majority of the WDMs claimed their Web site was created before the Web sites of their competitors and most of them said they had the first Web site in their product category. What probably happened is that WDMs looked at the Web about the same time, did not find Web sites for their competitors, and built their sites not realizing that the competition was most likely doing the same thing at the same time. A quick look at Table 1 indicates that many sites in the sample were created between two and three years ago.

The study found evidence of a copy cat phenomenon; that is, WDMs browsed the Web and modeled their sites with features that they liked on other sites. There seems to be a belief that other organizations were designing and modifying *their* sites based on research and that somehow this research was transferable. However, the findings of this

study indicate that no one is conducting formal research. WDMs also believe that Web sites are perceived by their publics as a mark of quality. Future research needs to examine if audiences share these beliefs. To plan and build effective Web sites, the audience perspective should be considered. Focus groups with Web users, conjoint analyses using Web site attributes for trade-offs, or experiments may achieve these goals.

This research paves the way for further inquiry into management and planning of Web sites. A survey using a larger sample of WDMs will help to understand current Web management practices better, and a survey directed specifically to public relations practitioners is needed to determine the role of public relations managers in Web site decision making. The purpose of this research was not to examine the roles of public relations practitioners, but rather to look at the research and planning process; the method and sample size were appropriate for the latter. Nonetheless, it was somewhat unexpected that none of the WDMs interviewed identified their job as public relations. Review of the public relations trade publications, on the other hand, indicates many Web sites are designed by public relations staff and it was presumed that at least some Web site decision-makers would be public relations professionals.

Considering the role of WDMs (whatever their job title) using the four role concept developed by Broom and Smith (1979), it appears that the WDM role at present is one of communication technician, concerned with producing the communication rather than looking at the strategic implications. To create more effective Web sites, WDMs should be expert prescribes, using the available tools of research, planning, and evaluation. Otherwise, as Seybold (1996) warns, the contents of Web sites may be less than a bad brochure intended for an ethereal audience who may not even have access to the medium.

Table 1. Selected Web sites

Accounting (24)*	Automotive (18)
Aviation (18)	Church Diocese (24)
Credit Unions (12)	Electronic Malls (36)
Fitness (18)	Food (36)
Gifts (36)	Hardware (12)
Insurance (12)	Magazines (18)
Music Retailers (24)	Newspapers (19)
Publisher (24)	Real Estate (31)
Retirement Services (24)	Toys (3)
Utilities (12)	Video Production (36)
Windows & Doors (12)	Wine (36)

* The number in parentheses refers to the number of months that the site has been on the Web.

Table 2. Analysis of Data

Units of information labeled in open coding

Decision-making process
Purpose of Web site
Research (or lack of)
Target market
Cost effectiveness

Categories which emerged in axial coding

Competition
Hedge against the future
Creating a presence
Status Symbol
Image building
Dynamic, evolutionary process
Cynical realism

Selective themes

What WDMs Plan
Know
Believe

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Appendix

Interview Guide

1. Note Web site address, contact number, and postal address.
 - a. Inquire about person responsible for Web site (WDM).
 - b. Contact these individuals (phone numbers)
2. Who (person) made decision to have a Web site in the first place? (Initiator) If WDM is not initiator, skip to #4, and pose #3 to Initiator (separate call). Who maintains your Web site? (Webmaster)
3. Why did you decide to have a Web site? Could you take me through your process of making the decision to have a Web site?
4. How long have you had a Web site? What is the primary purpose of your Web site? What are the objectives of your Web site? How are you ensuring that these objectives are being met?
5. What particular audience did you have in mind? How do you know that you are reaching this audience?
6. How did you decide on the format of your Web site? How did you decide on the content of your Web site? How did you decide how to categorize the content?
7. What research did you do to plan your Web site? Details on what was done, how, by whom, methodology etc.
8. Do any of your competitors have Web sites? Name them. Did you develop your strategy in competition to theirs? If so, how?
9. How often do you modify/make additions to your Web site? On what basis? Has your Web site undergone any major changes (design/content)? Describe these.
10. Do you conduct any research on an on-going basis to modify your Web site? Details.
11. Can you tell us how much money (including hiring or outsourcing of individuals) you are spending on your Web site? Do you feel that your Web site is cost-effective? If yes, how so? If not, then why are you continuing to maintain your Web site?
12. Would you say that Web sites are aimed at targeted audiences or that they are merely created and the target audience selects itself?
13. Is your Web site meant for business-business or business-consumer? Why? How are you ensuring this?

**ENLIGHTENED SELF INTEREST -- AN ETHICAL BASELINE FOR
TEACHING CORPORATE PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Despite the current unpopularity of "enlightened self interest" as an ethical baseline for teaching public relations, this paper suggests that it may be a practical way to bridge the discrepancy between the personal ethics approach to corporate decision-making favored by public relations educators and the fiduciary responsibility approach favored by corporate executives. The paper explores a number of studies that indicate that such a discrepancy does, indeed, exist and suggests that as long as it does, it will keep public relations practitioners from playing a significant role in corporate decision-making.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The concept of enlightened self interest as an ethical baseline for the practice of public relations has come under much criticism from those who hope to elevate the public relations profession to a higher ethical standard than just self interests.¹ Because of this criticism, the concept of enlightened self interest, which is often defined in such simplistic "self interest" terms as, "doing good because it will bring rewards in the long run," has all but vanished in the current editions of most college textbooks used in teaching public relations.²

This paper suggests, however, that "enlightened self interest" is very different than the concept of "self interest," and as such, enlightened self interest may be the most ethically consistent baseline for both corporate ethics and the practice of public relations. The paper addresses some key criticisms of the concept and provides three arguments for why public relations educators should consider a renewed emphasis on this ethical concept:

First, the paper argues that enlightened self interest can bridge a widening gap between how the majority of public relations educators view ethical corporate behavior and how business executives view

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it. A number of past surveys among public relations educators, students, practitioners and corporate executives are reviewed, indicating that, while the majority of educators believe and teach that one's personal ethics should guide corporate behavior, many business executives, including many public relations practitioners, are following different ethical standards. The studies' findings show that these corporate executives tend to believe, and are regularly reminded by their legal and accounting staffs, that their ethical responsibility is to the corporate stockholders for whom they work. They, consequently, place the organization's needs ahead of society's needs and often find themselves following a different ethical standard for their companies than what they may practice in their personal lives. This creates a dilemma for them, forcing them to walk a tightrope between their personal desire to act in a socially responsible manner while simultaneously representing the best financial interests of their firms' stockholders.

The paper suggests that, because of the serious discrepancies between how the majority of public relations educators view ethical corporate behavior and how business executives view it, some changes are necessary in the way that public relations is taught. Without these changes, newly hired public relations practitioners -- even those with a solid background in public relations ethics -- will enter the workforce ill-equipped to provide guidance on how to deal with the ethical dilemma that corporate executives face on a daily basis.

The second argument discussed is that enlightened self interest can serve as a means to combine into one topic of ethics all of the disparate and often contradictory discussions of ethics that students will encounter in their college careers. Several reviews of public relations textbooks are discussed along with a number of studies on the topic of public relations ethics. The findings of these studies indicate that there is no one conceptual framework from which to study public relations ethics. In addition, the

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studies indicate that the ethical examples in a typical public relations textbook³ are limited to professional ethical dilemmas that only public relations practitioners might encounter and which could be resolved by review of professional codes of ethics, such as the PRSA Code of Professional Standards and the IABC Codes of Ethics⁴. This leaves newly graduated public relations students with the potential of not having been exposed to the kind of ethical issues that corporate executives face, such as insider trading, employee hiring and advancement practices, executive benefits, and the legal versus ethical ramifications of environmental protection and product price and quality. The paper argues that this lack of perspective weakens the public relations practitioner's value within the corporation and makes him or her less likely to be included in important corporate decision-making.

The third argument put forth in this paper uses ideas from an early edition of a public relations text that once highly touted the concept of enlightened self interest and which now makes no mention of the concept.⁵ That early text suggested that companies that have come to realize that acting in a socially responsible manner can achieve significant long-term rewards will value the role of public relations more than those firms that have not yet bought into this concept. The paper elaborates on that suggestion and proposes future research to explore whether enlightened self interest could act as a predictor for the role that public relations practitioners will play in their organizations' decision-making.

Of particular interest is the implication that firms that already employ the concept of enlightened self interest may see the needs of society as coinciding with the needs of the firm, and they will typically have the public relations function placed at a high level within the organization. Accordingly, it is predicted that they will include public relations professionals early in the decision-making process for most important corporate decisions. Those firms that have not embraced the concept of enlightened self interest would be expected to place the public relations role lower in the organization and not

include public relations counselors in the key decision-making roles.

But even in those firms where the corporate executives see their primary responsibility as being only to the organization, the paper suggests that the role of the public relations professional can be greatly enhanced if he or she approaches the problem from an enlightened self interest perspective, rather than from a personal ethics perspective. This is because the use of enlightened self interest in the corporate environment could provide a common language and shared goals that meet the personal ethics and fiduciary responsibilities of both public relations practitioners and corporate executives.

CRITICISMS OF ENLIGHTENED SELF INTEREST:

Before elaborating further on the arguments in favor of enlightened self interest, the chief criticisms of the concept will first be explored and rebutted. One of the chief critics of the concept is Martinson⁶, who rejects the entire premise of using enlightened self interest as an ethical base for the practice of public relations or for corporate decision-making. He applauds the recent shift away from the discussion of enlightened self interest in public relations ethics and suggests that the current unpopularity of the concept in public relations textbooks is because public relations educators recognize that concern for company profits should have no place in the application of ethics to corporate decision-making.

Martinson argues that, on its surface, enlightened self interest justifies corporations doing the right thing for the wrong reasons; and accordingly, any pro-social campaigns that are implemented solely to improve the bottom-line for the corporation are not ethically sound practices. Martinson gives an example of a firm whose public relations practitioner "urges that the corporation implement costly policies to improve its environmental record because doing so will improve the corporation's

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image, which might also help counter government efforts to impose stronger environmental regulations."⁷ He then asks, "But what does that have to do with ethical conduct? If the corporation has a serious obligation to improve its environmental record, it should do so regardless of whether doing so will result in a better climate for its business actions."⁸

Martinson argues that true ethical behavior requires that an "individual or organization make a genuine sacrifice in order to act ethically."⁹ He suggests that, because the definition of enlightened self interest typically includes a "willingness of an individual or organization to 'pass ... up a present benefit for a greater gain further down the road,'"¹⁰ no real sacrifice is made -- only a postponement of the ultimate reward; and, therefore, the behavior is not ethical.

But Martinson fails to recognize that in the case of a corporate entity, no individual making the pro-social decision -- not the corporation's management nor the public relations practitioner -- would actually be making a "genuine sacrifice." Instead, depending on the cost and extent of the pro-social activity, the sacrifice would be imposed on people who had little or no role in the decision -- either the stockholders, in losses of profit or asset value; the customers, in terms of increased costs, lower product quality, or delays in delivery; or the employees, in terms of lost potential wages or risks to maintaining a secure job.

Going back to Martinson's example of the corporation's decision to improve its environmental record, it is difficult to see how that firm could come to any decision without the use of enlightened self interest as an ethical baseline, weighing of all the options, taking into consideration the costs and benefits to all concerned parties. Without that type of analysis, how would a public relations counselor advise a corporate executive about the level of environmental cleanup the firm should undertake? Should the firm improve its record just to the point where it keeps from being slapped with civil or

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criminal penalties? (This might meet the criterion of economists such as Milton Friedman who believe that corporations have no right to implement pro-social campaigns simply for the sake of improving social welfare. But meeting minimal legal requirements does not seem to be very socially responsible.)¹¹ Or should the public relations counselor advise taking every bit of profit the company earns and donating it to environmental causes and building its products to be totally pollution free -- ultimately making them so expensive to build that the firm risks bankruptcy? From this example, it should be clear that telling a corporation's management to do the "right" thing is easy, but finding the "right" solution to the problem takes real skill and, undoubtedly, some form of compromise between today's costs and tomorrow's rewards. And that is the bottom line for the concept of enlightened self interest.

The other chief criticism of enlightened self interest is that "anytime self-interest becomes the standard by which ethical behavior is judged, any action -- as long it is in one's own interests -- becomes justifiable."¹² Thus, enlightened self interest, according to Thomas¹³, puts the public relations professional in an untenable position to not only promote corporate pro-social programs, but also to accept and defend less socially desirable (or even immoral) actions when they serve the corporation's interests. Martinson agrees, arguing that "If the practitioner's concerns center exclusively around the organization's/client's self-interest, how will he or she respond on those occasions when acting ethically is in opposition to acting in that self-interest?"¹⁴

This paper does not dispute this argument against using self-interests as the ethical baseline for corporate or public relations actions, but it suggests that *enlightened self interest* is not the same thing as *self interest*. *Enlightened self interest* has within its definition an expressed desire to bring benefit to society because the organization is a member of that society¹⁵. It is based on the premise that "a healthy corporation cannot exist in a sick community."¹⁶ Whereas *self interest* has a more limiting definition

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and a view of the organization as an isolated entity that seeks benefit for its actions, with no concern for the impact of those actions on other entities or society as a whole¹⁷. Using this distinction between *self interest* and *enlightened self interest*, it can be argued that enlightened self interest can provide sound ethical guidelines for those who practice public relations and who serve as ethical counselors to corporate executives.

FINDINGS OF PAST STUDIES --

THREE ARGUMENTS FOR ENLIGHTENED SELF INTEREST

As has been suggested, educators who use enlightened self interest as an ethical baseline for teaching public relations might benefit in three very practical ways: First, it may give their students a powerful tool to help them become more valued members of the corporate staff. Second, it can serve as a means to combine into one topic of ethics all of the disparate and often contradictory discussions of ethics that students will encounter in their college careers. Third, it may help predict the role that public relations practitioners will play in corporate decision-making. Each of these arguments and the supporting evidence from previous studies will be reviewed in turn.

1) Elevating the role of public relations: The first argument in favor of using enlightened self interest as the ethical baseline for teaching public relations relies on the findings of a number surveys about ethics among corporate executives and public relations educators, students, and practitioners. One of these studies was the Newsom, Ramsey, and Carrell 1992 survey of public relations students, educators and Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) members, which, among other things, highlighted the difference between how educators perceive the role of personal integrity in the practice of public relations and how practitioners perceive it.¹⁸

The authors compared responses to the question, "A public relations practitioner's first

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responsibility is to the __?__,” by specific respondent groups and found that the majority of *educators* listed “Self” as the primary responsibility, while the majority of professional *practitioners* chose “Client” as their primary responsibility.¹⁹ The authors clearly felt that the practitioners’ responses were inconsistent with what public relations students are taught in traditional public relations courses and concluded their study by suggesting that practitioners needed to be reminded by educators “about the role of personal integrity in the practice of public relations (and) how personal integrity is compromised or subsumed by a client’s interest or institutional goals.”²⁰

There was agreement, however, between educators and practitioners on the role that public relations should play in an organization. The study found that nearly 87% of all respondents agreed that public relations should be a policy shaper for corporate management.²¹ This response rate was not broken down by respondent group, but the high score from the majority of respondents reaffirms the strong belief among educators and practitioners alike that those who have studied within a public relations discipline are extremely qualified to provide ethical guidance within an organization. Preparing students for this “policy shaper” role also helps to explain why public relations educators place such strong emphasis on the teaching of ethical theory and establishing a formal ethical basis for the practice of public relations.

In stark contrast to this view, however, are the findings from several surveys of corporate executives that indicate that public relations practitioners are extremely low on the list of individuals from whom they seek ethical guidance.²² In one such study reported in 1981 by Lindenmann and Lapetina, CEOs reported that public relations practitioners were lacking “a comprehensive understanding of the social, political and business problems and issues about which they are forced to write and counsel.”²³

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A 1992 survey of Fortune 1000 CEOs by the Center for Business Ethics showed that, despite a significant increase in the number of ethics officers within corporations, top executives "seldom look to public relations professionals to head ethics initiatives."²⁴

In Fitzpatrick's 1995 survey of members of the Ethics Officer Association, this lack of recognition by corporate executives that public relations practitioners possess any special ethics expertise was confirmed by showing that less than 7% of the 104 ethics officers responding were from the public relations field. In contrast, 28% of those ethics officers were from the legal departments of their firms, 25% were from the human resources departments, and 17% from the finance departments.²⁵

In a question similar to that asked in the 1992 Newsom, Ramsey, and Carrell survey of public relations professionals, Fitzpatrick reported that "when asked to whom their primary loyalty is owed, 38.5% said, 'to the organization,' 'Shareholders,' 'customers/clients/consumers,' 'public at large,' and 'employees' were identified by 14.6%, 13.5%, 10.4%, and 9.4% of the respondents, respectively.

A direct comparison of the Newsom et al. and Fitzpatrick surveys cannot be made, since "self" was not one of the options on the Fitzpatrick ethics officers survey. However, there does appear to be some consistency between the ethics officers in general and the public relations practitioners in the Newsom, Ramsey, and Carrell survey, since they both indicated that they were more loyal to the corporate client than to any other constituency. But it also reaffirms the disparity between what public relations *educators* believe the ethical baseline should be and what it actually is within the corporation.

In addition, Fitzpatrick reported that ethics officers ranked "complying with laws as the most important factor in helping a company fulfill its social responsibility" (92.7% ranked this "important" or "very important")²⁶ The other top factors selected by this group of ethics officers were: "providing safe/healthy workplace" (87.4%); "protecting the environment" (77.1%); "avoiding harm to

constituents" (76.8); and "providing equal employment opportunities" (60.2%).²⁷

Fitzpatrick summarized the conclusions of the various corporate surveys as collectively showing a resounding lack of value for public relations input to corporate ethics issues. She suggested that their lack of reliance on public relations professionals may be because corporate executives might be unaware of the true ethical nature of public relations or feel public relations employees are too low-ranking to be able to provide any broad insights to complex problems.²⁸

She also suggested an alternative possibility -- that, since ethics officers' primary focus (and, we assume, the primary focus of the corporate executives who selected them for such a role) is on "complying with the law," they have an "apparent belief that the views of the media and public are not very important to an organization."²⁹ This, she concluded, "suggests a lack of appreciation for the impact of public opinion on an organization's ability to operating successfully."³⁰

These conclusions are in agreement with those of Heath and Ryan³¹, who concluded in their study that corporate executives have too narrow a view of ethical behavior and that there is an inherent weakness in this view, because "the attention of those charged with developing standards for (ethical) behavior is turned inward."³²

The Role of Personal Ethics in Corporate Decision-Making

This harsh criticism of the ethical position of corporate executives by public relations educators may be yet another symptom of the widening gulf between the two groups. The few suggestions in the public relations studies that are offered to rectify the situation primarily involve educating corporate executives to understand the public relations perspective on ethics and to encourage corporate executives to apply the same ethical standards to corporate practices that they would apply to their personal behavior.

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Interestingly, corporate executives suggest that it is *their* perspective that needs to be understood by public relations practitioners and that, while personal ethics are important, a corporate executive is not free to make corporate decisions purely for the sake of acting more socially responsible.

The survey findings indicate that corporate executives' less than enthusiastic view of the role of public relations in guiding corporate ethical policy could be changed if public relations practitioners became more familiar with the specific motivations and legal, financial and ethical responsibilities that corporate executives have toward the shareholders whom they serve. This implies that, while public relations educators may feel it is important to teach their students: "To thine own self be true," this advice will be of little help to a newly hired public relations professional who hopes to play an important role in guiding an organization to become more socially responsible, but is accused of being naive about corporate responsibilities the first time he or she suggests using personal ethics as a standard for corporate practices.

The Case Against Personal Ethics:

In a discussion among a group of past PRSA Gold Anvil winners on how public relations professionals can improve their role as counselors to top management³³, two public relations veterans seemed to agree with the viewpoint of the corporate executives who make decisions based on *corporate* needs and goals rather than *personal* needs and goals. Betsy Ann Plank suggested that public relations practitioners should redefine their role and functions strategically and in client terms, while Chester Burger suggested that practitioners should develop an understanding of the business in which they are employed. Both of these perspectives suggest that public relations educators need to make a change in how corporate social responsibility and public relations ethics are taught.

This is especially true for educators who have a strong anti-business bias and who agree with

the positions of such authors as Martinson³⁴ and Gunther,³⁵ who accuse corporate executives of not giving enough to social causes because they are too interested in profit-making and "hiding behind the corporate shield."³⁶ Rather than just dismissing as corrupt, misguided, or mean-spirited a corporate officer's ranking of "increasing profits" as more important than "sponsoring social causes,"³⁷ those who teach public relations ethics need to become more aware themselves of the laws and expectations imposed upon corporate executives. Educators need to understand and pass on to their public relations students that corporate officers are often sued by stockholders and can even be brought up on criminal charges if they ignore their fiduciary responsibilities to the corporation. For these corporate executives, the concept of corporate social responsibility cannot be considered apart from its impact on the shareholders and the long-term costs and benefits to the firm. Accordingly, these executives are often faced with serious dilemmas about how to proceed with pro-social issues.

Indeed, Stendardi³⁸ points out that until 1954 when the Supreme Court established the "business judgment rule" in the Smith Manufacturing Company Case (Smith vs. Barlow, 1950), corporations were only legally allowed to make contributions "that were in direct relation to their shareholders' best interest. After this case, corporate managers were free to make contributions that in their judgment would promote the corporation's interest."³⁹

Since the Smith case, business executives have continued to debate the legitimacy of corporate philanthropy and pro-social causes. Economists such as Milton Friedman make a strong case completely against it, arguing that a corporate officer who gives money to a charity because, from a personal ethics perspective it seems to be a "good" thing to do is, in fact, acting unethically because he or she is using the stockholders' money in an inappropriate manner⁴⁰. According to Friedman, stockholders who wish to contribute to social causes do so through personal giving. When they invest

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in corporate stock, they assume that corporate management is acting as their agent for only one purpose -- to protect and/or increase their investment, although they also assume that these corporate agents are doing so in an ethical and socially responsible manner:

No other moral claim may be made on those in corporate business than to fulfill their implied promise to their clients, namely, to secure for them the greatest possible economic benefits, 'while conforming to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and in ethical custom.'⁴¹

The fact that there continues to be proxy fights, lawsuits and shareholder resolutions to eliminate or reduce the level of corporate philanthropy⁴², shows that Friedman is not alone in this viewpoint and that corporate executives who ask for some proof of benefit before agreeing to participate in a social cause are not acting unethically. But educators also need to understand and convey the fact that thinking in terms of the benefits to shareholders does not necessarily mean that corporate executives do not possess a strong sense of personal ethics and a strong sense of duty to society at large. It may only mean that they do not believe that personal ethics is the best guideline for deciding on corporate practices or for determining a public relations policy.

Another reason why they may not believe that personal ethics is the best ethical baseline for establishing corporate practices and public relations policy is that it can lead to inconsistent behaviors. Studies conducted by Wright⁴³ and Shamir, Reed, and Connell⁴⁴ on the role of personal ethics in the practice of public relations indicate that ethical practices do not correlate closely to the professional standards that are taught in school or are learned through experience or age. Instead, they simply reflect the personal ethics that the individuals brought with them to the profession in the first place. While one could argue that everyone should be operating with the same personal ethical standards, the responses to questions on ethical practices in the Shamir, Reed, and Connell study show that this is not the case. This would indicate that reliance on personal ethics alone could lead to inconsistent corporate

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standards and could possibly pit the personal ethics of the public relations practitioner against the personal ethics of the corporate executive, with neither having any clear guidance as to which action is the most ethical.

2) Public Relations Students' Conflicting Exposure to Ethics: The second argument in favor of enlightened self interest relies on a number of studies about how public relations ethics are taught. These studies support the claim that there already exists a wide disparity between what public relations students learn about ethics in college courses and what they will actually encounter within a corporate environment. In addition, a number of reviews of current public relations textbooks suggest that public relations students will encounter significant inconsistencies even while they are in school.

In a review of key public relations texts, Bivens concluded, "(There is) a wide disparity in coverage of the topic (of ethics), ranging from sparse philosophical to primarily anecdotal."⁴⁵ He suggested that "there is no accepted conceptual framework from which to study public relations ethics."⁴⁶

And, although several (texts) present themselves logically, so far only the concept of corporate social responsibility seems to be used with any consistency. Within all these texts, however, this concept is discussed separately from that of professionalism with little or no attempt to link the two notions.⁴⁷

Bivens' chief concern with this approach is that the concept of *social responsibility* is treated as a blanket term that refers to business or corporate ethics and is discussed separately from professional or personal ethics.⁴⁸ "This prescriptive approach, although interesting, may not actually aid a reader's understanding of the process of moral decision making."⁴⁹

In a 1996 general review of six of the most frequently used basic public relations textbooks, Wright found that while ethics are discussed in every text, invited criticisms on the books usually

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included a desire for more and clearer discussion of ethics.⁵⁰

In addition to this inconsistent or limited approach to ethics in public relations "principles" courses, public relations students may not even be exposed to specific discussions about ethics within their applied course work -- their creative campaigns and strategy courses -- although they may encounter campaign strategies that have ethical ramifications such as "cause related marketing," "corporate sponsorships," or "green advertising." Wilcox, Ault and Agee.⁵¹ provide such success stories as AT&T building loyalties in school children with their sponsorship of Adventure Clubs; Minute Maid sponsoring literacy programs; and American Express associating itself with the Statue of Liberty restoration project.

Yet few, if any, public relations or marketing texts specifically address these strategies from an ethical perspective or question if there is any conflict of interest or any manipulation of society at large. For example, Kotler's marketing text⁵², which includes advertising and public relations chapters, provides a number of examples of successful companies that have capitalized on the "societal marketing concept," including The Body Shop cosmetics firm and Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream. Kotler states, "A number of companies have achieved notable sales and profit gains through adopting and practicing the societal marketing concept."⁵³ Wilcox, Ault and Agee summarize the strategy as follows:

Although cause-related marketing doesn't necessary improve product sales, public relations professionals call it an effective way to communicate a company's values and corporate philosophy. From a marketing perspective, support of a popular cause can foster brand loyalty by consumers who believe in that cause.⁵⁴

Contrasted with this pro-social perspective on corporate practices may be the students' exposure to classical theories of ethics, either in specific public relations or advertising ethics courses or in independent philosophy courses, which may create an ethical conflict in their minds. This is because

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classical ethics theory -- especially deontological ethics where it is taught that the end consequences of an action should not be taken into consideration to decide the morality of the action⁵⁵, would likely condemn cause-related marketing activities because they violate two key premises of ethical behavior -- one, that people should be treated as ends, not as means to an end (i.e. corporate profits); and two, that one should do good because it is an inherent duty within every human being. These philosophies would stress that individuals should not do good simply because they seek a reward in return for their actions.⁵⁶ Given this ethical perspective, cause-related marketing strategies would seem self-serving and not quite ethical, notwithstanding the good that they may bring to society.

The ultimate conclusion from these reviews is that there is a need to find common ground for all of the ethical issues that public relations students may encounter. It is suggested that enlightened self interest could meet such a challenge because it continues to play an important role in business ethics⁵⁷, and, although rarely mentioned by name in current public relations texts, the concept is alluded to in most of them as a vague justification for corporate pro-social campaigns.

Enlightened Self Interest as an Ethical Bridge:

In what may be perceived by some as a backward slide toward Friedman's fiduciary view of corporate ethics, Stendardi⁵⁸ suggests that enlightened self-interest, redefined in terms of "social investing," may be the most logical and justifiable approach to corporate philanthropy and pro-social campaigns from the corporate executive's point of view. Stendardi's redefinition shifts the emphasis on philanthropy and pro-social programs away from a general benefit that will accrue to the firm at some time in the future, to a "more specific, more measurable benefit"⁵⁹ with a discernible payback for the firm in a relatively short time period. Since the motivation behind this type of activity is "serving corporate interests and objectives"⁶⁰ and not "need or altruism," there is a lower risk of angering

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stockholders, who might otherwise force the firm to curtail its philanthropic activities altogether.

Stendardi provides examples ⁶¹ where both society and the firm benefitted from corporate philanthropy that was guided by this newly defined concept of enlightened self interest. This includes:

- American Express justifying its donations to the San Francisco Arts Festival because "they realized that the demographic profile of the customers that they wanted to reach for their cards was the same as people who were interested in the arts."
- Champion International, which is in the paper business, supporting photography and new ways of using paper itself as art.
- Hallmark sponsoring fine art and design programs to support the creative talent that the company needs.
- IBM and Apple donating computer equipment to colleges to establish a user base.

These examples provide insight into why enlightened self-interest can create a bridge that allows corporate executives, who take their fiduciary responsibility to stockholders very seriously, to approve programs that meet both the needs of society and the needs of the firm. John Akers, President and CEO of IBM, seemed to be particularly aware of the conflict between his own personal desire to give and his responsibility to protect the assets of the firm's stockholders when he said, "IBM is not a philanthropy, we are a business ... only individuals can be philanthropic and give money because it feels good. Corporations must justify giving away money to stockholders, employees and customers."⁶² He gave a perfect argument for how a bottom-line oriented approach to enlightened self interest allowed him to resolve the conflict by justifying his company's donations in terms of the long-term benefit that could be achieved.

3) Predicting the role of public relations: The third reason for public relations educators to adopt enlightened self interest is that it can be a useful model for following the historical progression of the growing importance of public relations in organizations over the past fifty years. In an early edition

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of their book, *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice* (1983)⁶³, Aronoff and Baskin did an excellent job of showing, not only the overall trend in organizational attitudes toward corporate social responsibility, but that the practice of public relations within corporations has followed this trend as well. Ironically, the later editions of their book no longer included this discussion⁶⁴, but if their original suggestion was correct, this could serve as a potential model for future research to predict the role that public relations professionals will play in any particular organization.

They suggested that under the principle of trustee management; a precursor to enlightened self interest and a principle that continues to be employed in many firms today, corporations exercise social responsibility by weighing the needs of the stockholders (who presumably want maximum profits) "against those of several other groups in society which affect and are affected by the organization" (employees, customers, suppliers, and the general public).⁶⁵ The reasoning behind this principle is that, by sacrificing some profits in the short term to meet the needs of another public besides the stockholders, long-term profits will ultimately be increased.⁶⁶ They suggested that in firms following the trustee management principle, public relations practitioners are no longer just low-level, publicity generators, but have moved into a legitimate management role responsible for dealing with the pressures exerted by the various publics and to counsel top management on decisions that have to be weighed by more than just short term profits alone.

In contrast to Stendari's "social investing" concept of enlightened self interest, which seems to be more closely aligned with Aronoff and Baskin's definition of trustee management, Aronoff and Baskin suggested that enlightened self interest involves corporations undertaking major business actions "that do not have any direct relationship to profit ... and that it permits decisions that lack obvious relationships to either long- or short-range profit."⁶⁷ They pointed out, however, that the economic

well-being of the firm is still the driving force behind this principle: "Although profit may not be the primary consideration, actions taken are believed to be in the ultimate best interests of the firm."⁶⁸

They also suggested that in those firms practicing enlightened self interest, the role of the public relations practitioner becomes even more complex than under trustee management. Aronoff and Baskin predicted that public relations professionals who find themselves in firms that practice the principle of enlightened self interest are most likely to be in the executive ranks of the firm. They are often expected to represent the interests of various publics inside corporate decision making circles and to help weigh the consequences of corporate actions. "Frequently, public relations practitioners assume the role of advocate or ombudsman on behalf of consumers, minorities, environmentalists or other publics. In this role the public relations practitioner is asked to be completely familiar with the needs and views of these publics and press their cause within the organization structure."⁶⁹

Future empirical research is recommended to explore these predictions about the role of enlightened self interest and public relations practitioners in corporate decision-making. But if Aronoff and Baskin were correct and there is a direct correlation between the two, the resulting model could shed some much needed light on how and under what circumstances public relations practitioners can play a more important role in guiding more ethical corporate decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Based on the previously-discussed responses of corporate executives about the role of ethics and public relations in corporate decision-making, it appears that despite public relations educators' attempts instill in their students a profound sense of personal ethics, little of this insight will be transferred into the corporate world unless the public relations practitioner knows how to apply it to the

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corporation's goals. But this is not to suggest that educators should stop encouraging their students to rely on a strong sense of personal ethics when they practice public relations. It only suggests that the public relations counselor can use enlightened self interest to create a common motivation and a common language with corporate executives. And this, in turn, gives them a key to the door of the executive suite, which will allow them to get into the boardroom to be heard. Without that key, they can possess all the knowledge in the world and still not be of any assistance to their companies or to society as a whole.

To understand how this key works and to pass this information on to their students, it is important that educators understand the very real ethical and legal dilemmas that corporate executives face, instead of dismissing them out-of-hand as being mere excuses to satisfy corporate greed or self-interests. It also means equipping students with more than a professional code of standards and a philosophical foundation of ethical theory. It means providing students with a firm understanding of business ethics and the legal and financial responsibilities of a corporate officer entrusted with stockholder assets. By showing students how the concept of enlightened self interest can be used to make ethical decisions that can benefit all concerned parties, educators will be equipping them with the skills they need to stay true to their own sense of personal ethics while succeeding in a corporate environment.

This is especially true for those who work for corporate executives who are constantly reminded of their fiduciary responsibilities to stockholders. For these executives to seek and follow ethical guidance from a public relations professional, that professional must not only have a strong understanding of corporate practices and regulations and a strong sense of personal ethics, but he or she must be able to clearly and quantitatively demonstrate that doing the socially responsible thing is

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ultimately good for business. Once corporate executives are armed with this information, it frees them to take action that will fulfill both of their ethical responsibilities -- to the corporate stockholders and to society at large.

While some purists may still find fault with this approach to corporate and public relations ethics because it continues to consider the consequences in making ethical decisions, even Hospers and Martinson acknowledge that "there are good self-interested reasons for moral action -- one pays one's debts and keeps one's promises in order to gain the respect of others or a reputation in one's community."⁷⁰ The intent of this paper has been to show educators that it is within this type of self-interest that enlightened self interest can provide an ethical foundation for the practice of public relations. And despite the fact that virtually all current public relations texts have abandoned direct discussion the concept, the underlying justification for enlightened self interest does continue to exist in most of these texts. It is simply couched in such phrases as: "acting responsibly is good for business." Teaching this concept in a straight-forward manner, rather than burying it in such phrases, will help eliminate the apparent contradictions between the personal baseline of public relations ethics and the fiduciary baseline of corporate ethics.

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ENDNOTES

1. David Martinson, "Enlightened Self-Interest Fails as an Ethical Baseline in Public Relations," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 9 (2), pp. 100-109.
2. Ibid, p. 102. Martinson reviewed a number of past and present public relations texts and said that, despite the fact that the concept of enlightened self interest used to be widely taught to public relations students, most of today's current public relations texts do not even make reference to this concept. A cursory review by the author of six introductory public relations texts published after 1996 supports Martinson's findings.
3. For an example, see Dennis Wilcox, Phillip Ault, and Warren Agee, *Public Relations Strategies and Tactics*, 4th edition. (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).
4. Ibid., p. 46 and pp. 123-133.
5. Craig Aronoff and Otis Baskin (1983). *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company.
6. Martinson, op cit., pp. 100 - 109.
7. Ibid at p. 103.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. at p. 102.
10. Ibid at p. 102, citing L. Thomas (1989), *Living Morally: A Psychology of Moral Character*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 67.
11. See discussion of Friedman's philosophy on page 13.
12. L. Thomas, op cit.
13. Ibid.
14. David L. Martinson, op cit., p. 104.
15. Craig Aronoff and Otis Baskin, (1983), op cit., Ch. 18 "The Concept of Social Responsibility, at p. 377.

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16. Edward J. Stendardi, Jr., "Corporate Philanthropy: The Redefinition of Enlightened Self-Interest," *The Social Science Journal* (1992), Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 21-30, at p. 22 citing Jeffrey L. Koroach, "Charitable Investments: Is This Growing Practice True Philanthropy?" *Industry Week*, 223, 1 (Oct. 1, 1984), p. 32.
17. Martinson, op cit, p. 102.
18. Doug A. Newsom, Shirley A. Ramsey, and Bob J. Carrell, "Chameleon Chasing II: A Replication," *Public Relations Review* 19 (1), (1993), pp. 33-47.
19. Ibid., pp. 38 - 39.
20. Ibid., p. 46.
21. Ibid., p. 39.
22. Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 250. See also J. B. Kamm, "Ethics Officers Gaining Acceptance at Many Firms, Survey Reveals," *Ethikos*, (January/February 1993), pp. 7-9/12; Robert L. Heath and Michael Ryan, "Public Relations Role in Defining Corporate Social Responsibility," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 4, (1989), pp., 21-38; and Dena Winokur and Robert K. Kinkead, "How Public Relations Fits into Corporate Strategy," *Public Relations Journal*, (May 1993), pp. 16-23.
23. Walter Lindenmann and A. Lapetina, "Management's View of the Future of Public Relations," *Public Relations Review*, (1981), pp. 3-13, at p. 8. Also see Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 256.
24. Reported by Fitzpatrick, op cit., p. 250 and citing an Ethics Officer Association general information brochure, 1994.
25. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., pp. 252-253.
26. See Fitzpatrick's, op cit., p. 255, Table 5 for a complete ranking that ethics officers gave to 14 factors that could help a company fulfill its social responsibilities. Interestingly, "Complying with Laws" was ranked highest, while "Sponsoring Social Causes" was ranked lowest.
27. Ibid. It is interesting to note that 0% regarded the factor "providing equal employment opportunities" as "very important." This was the only factor out of 15 that no one regarded as "very important."
28. Ibid., p. 256.
29. Ibid

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30. Ibid.
31. Heath and Ryan, "Public Relations' Role in Defining Corporate Social Responsibility," at 34;
32. Ibid and Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 256.
33. Susan Fry Bovet; Edward H. Moore; and Annemarie Orrick, "Quest for Top Management Acceptance Continues -- Pursuing Professional Excellence," *Public Relations Journal*, Oct.-Nov., 1994, vol. 50, no. 8, pp. 27-38.
34. Martinson, op. cit.
35. Herbert Chao Gunther, "The Corporate Responsibility Shell Game," *Business and Society Review*, Spring, 1992, no. 81, pp. 73-76.
36. Ibid.
37. Response categories are from Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 255, Table 5.
38. Stendardi, op. cit.
39. Ibid at p. 21.
40. Carson, Thomas. 1993. "Friedman's Theory of Corporate Social Responsibility," in *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring), 3 - 32.
41. Tibor R. Machan, "Professional Responsibilities of Corporate Managers," *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, 13 (3), 1994, pp. 57-69, cite Milton Friedman at p. 62.
42. Richard I. Morris and Daniel A. Biederman, "How to Give Away Money Intelligently," *Harvard Business Review*, (Nov.-Dec. 1985), 156 cited in Edward J. Stendardi, Jr., op cit., p. 23. This article reports that there were 195 shareholder proxy statement resolutions filed from 1979-1985 to eliminate or reduce the level of corporate philanthropy in U.S. corporations.
43. Donald K. Wright, "Individual Ethics Determine Public Relations Practice," *Public Relations Journal* (April, 1985), pp. 38-39.
44. Jacob Shamir, Barbara Straus Reed, and Steven Connell, "Individual Differences in Ethical Values of Public Relations Practitioners" *Journalism Quarterly* (Winter 1990), Vol. 67, No. 4, pp 956-963.
45. Thomas H. Bivins, "Are Public Relations Texts Covering Ethics Adequately?" in *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 4 (1989), pp. 39-52.

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46. Ibid., at p. 39.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid, at p. 44.
49. Ibid., at p. 47.
50. Wright, op cit.
51. Ibid, pp. 360-368.
52. Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation, and Control*, Eighth Edition (Englewood cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994).
53. Ibid, p. 30
54. Wilcox, Ault, and Agee, op. cit., p. 366.
55. Cornelius B. Pratt, "Applying Classical Ethical Theories to Ethical Decision Making in Public Relations -- Perrier's Product Recall, in *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol 8, No. 1, pp 70-94. See the discussion of deontological (or absolutist) ethics, p. 74.
56. Martinson, op cit.
57. Harry J. Van Buren III, "Business Ethics for the New Millennium," in *Business and Society Review*, Spring 1995, no. 93, pp. 51-55.
58. Stendardi., op cit.
59. Ibid at p. 25.
60. Ibid at p. 26.
61. Ibid at p. 26 & 27.
62. Ibid at p. 27, citing Philip Maher, "What Corporations Get by Giving," *Business Marketing*, 69, 12, (December 1984), p. 87.
63. Aronoff and Baskin (1983), op cit.
64. It seems ironic that, given the emphasis on ethics by PR educators, the revised editions of Aronoff and Baskin (1988 and 1992) have eliminated all mention of the enlightened self interest principle and any real discussion of social responsibility and the public relations professional's role within the corporation for helping to set the ethical agenda.
65. Aronoff and Baskin, op cit. at p. 377.

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- 66. Ibid.
- 67. Ibid.
- 68. Ibid at p. 378.
- 69. Ibid.
- 70. Martinson, op. cit. Also see J. Hospers, *Human Conduct: an Introduction to the Problems of Ethics*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).

**PUBLIC RELATIONS' POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO
EFFECTIVE HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

A national survey of 191 heads of public relations departments in hospitals measured the department's expertise or knowledge to practice excellent public relations, as defined by recent research. Utilizing two scales original to the study, correlations showed strong and significant relationships between organizational effectiveness and departments with high potential to practice the two-way symmetrical model, enact the manager role, and participate in strategic planning. Findings can be used by hospitals to help resolve the current healthcare crisis.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS' POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO EFFECTIVE HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT

During most of this decade, America's healthcare system, including hospitals, has been in a crisis situation—"an industry under siege" (Lewton, 1998, p. 6). Legislation introduced by the Clinton administration in the early 1990s called for universal coverage and dramatic restructuring of the system. Widespread government-imposed reform was avoided with promises that marketplace reform would curtail rapidly escalating healthcare costs. Yet stories about fraud, exorbitant fees, overcrowded charity wards, and uninsured people denied treatment continue to be reported by the media on a daily basis.

For hospitals, financial pressures created by the rise of managed care, reductions in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, and shorter lengths of patient stay have resulted in record numbers of acquisitions and mergers, as well as closings (Gilbert, 1995). Consolidation, such as the recent merger announced by New Jersey's Atlantic Health System and Robert Wood Johnson Health System, has come under attack by critics who charge that the ventures have more to do with improving corporate profitability than with improving medical services (Schwab, 1998).

Acquisitions and mergers, in turn, have led to downsizing and divesting. For example, after years of acquiring hospitals, Columbia-HCA Healthcare Corporation—one of the nation's largest networks—currently is undergoing a major reorganization that will rid the company of many of its properties ("Columbia/HCA," 1998). A new executive team is determining which hospitals will be jettisoned and how those remaining must pare down to adjust to an anticipated, smaller profit margin.

In such a turbulent environment, hospital managers are scrambling to cut costs, reconfigure delivery systems, and develop viable programs. All eyes are firmly focused on the bottom line as chief executive officers (CEOs) mandate measures to address operational problems.

Lewton (1998) described initial reaction to the crisis from a public relations perspective:

All the players were reeling from the onslaught of continual change, and figuring out how to survive took precedence over trying to educate the public. Hospitals responded to the lure of marketing gimmicks . . . rather than focusing on dialogue with the communities they serve, nurturing relationships with key stakeholders, and making substantive changes to adapt to a new environment. (p. 6)

Consumers, according to Lewton, were caught in the middle of the cost-access battle and now "have serious doubts about the intentions and integrity of everyone involved in health care" (p. 6).

Lewton (1998) called on public relations professionals to help resolve the ongoing crisis and presented some fundamental initiatives requiring their leadership. She commanded, for example, "Health care organizations need to stop sending messages and start listening—to patients, consumers, community leaders" (p. 6). She further advised, "Replace rhetoric with education and dialogue" (p. 6). Consensus-building, rather than the more common propaganda, is needed. She claimed that such action "could lead to better understanding" (p. 6).

The initiatives outlined by Lewton require sophisticated expertise and knowledge. As demonstrated shortly, theory predicts that not all practitioners have the necessary capability. Whether or not public relations departments in hospitals are qualified to meet the challenge is unknown because little research has focused on public relations in this type of organization. The most applicable study was conducted more than 10 years ago (Fabiszak, 1985). It found that hospitals tend to practice public relations in a way that theory describes as the least effective (i.e., press agency), which bodes poorly for resolution of the crisis.

Public relations in hospitals is a relatively new function, dating back only to the 1960s, when hospitals began competing for patients (Lewton, 1991). During the 1980s, many public relations departments were subsumed by marketing departments as CEOs and other administrators attempted to fill beds and keep expensive equipment in use during an era of declining market share. The function's current position in hospitals is an unsettled issue.

A study by Dines and Schneller (1992) found that whereas many hospital CEOs maintain that public relations' importance in healthcare is increasing, they are not clear as to what public relations as a discipline or profession entails, or how it should fit into the organizational structure. Commenting on the study, Lewton (1992) placed much of the blame for CEOs' confusion on practitioners' preoccupation with "production-oriented tasks," which reinforces views of public relations as a lower-level technical function rather than one that provides strategic counsel to senior management. She appropriately added, "Hospitals may also be contributing to this technical emphasis by hiring people who are neither formally trained nor experienced in the profession" (p. 51).

As a result, public relations departments often are one of the first targets for budget cuts and downsizing; entire departments sometimes are eliminated. Yet, to overcome their crisis situation, hospitals need excellent public relations, as defined by the Excellence Project, an extensive research study sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Foundation (Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995; J. E. Grunig [Ed.], 1992; J. E. Grunig, L. A. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Repper, & White, 1991). Theory emerging from the study holds that public relations departments with high potential for excellence will contribute to an organization's effectiveness by helping it meet its budget, reach its goals and objectives, and advance its mission. Such departments are valued by CEOs and others, who depend on public relations to manage the organization's relationships with such strategic publics as consumers, government, the media, and employees.

To determine the potential for excellence of public relations departments in U.S. hospitals, a study was designed from recent research findings and theory, and data were gathered from a national sample. The study's purpose was to identify characteristics that predict which departments are likely to contribute to organizational effectiveness.

RELATED LITERATURE

The literature relevant to this study is divided into four sections: public relations models, public relations roles, previous research on departmental potential, and principles of strategic planning.

Public Relations Models

In 1984, J. E. Grunig (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) conceptualized four models of public relations, which he derived from the combinations of communication direction (one-way vs. two-way) and balance of intended effects (asymmetrical vs. symmetrical). The four typical ways public relations is practiced are: (a) press agency, (b) public information, (c) two-way asymmetrical, and (d) two-way symmetrical. Departments use all four models to some extent; however, they practice one model predominantly.

A full description of the models can be found elsewhere (e.g., J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992). Summarizing here, press agency is the oldest model, as well as the least effective and ethical. Its purpose is propaganda, and truth is not important. Practitioners relying on press agency strive to get the name of their organization in the mass media. The public information model personifies public relations as an in-house journalist, with the primary purpose of disseminating factual information to the organization's publics. Practitioners concentrate on producing news releases, publications, and other public relations techniques. Like press agents, they conduct little or no research. Thus, communication is one-way, as it also is for press agency.

The purpose of the two-way asymmetrical model is scientific persuasion. Its practitioners utilize social science theory and research on attitudes to help their organizations sell products, create a desired image, and persuade publics to accept the company line. Information gained from research is used to shape messages; it is not intended to change the organization or affect

its behavior. In other words, the model is based on unbalanced effects, as is press agency and public information. Only the newest way of practicing public relations, the two-way symmetrical model, seeks balanced outcomes for both organizations and publics. It uses research not only to shape messages, but also to position the organization in harmony with its important publics (i.e., the model helps organizations adapt to their environment). Practitioners of this model serve as mediators between their organization and its publics, with a goal of mutual understanding.

According to J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992), members of the IABC research team, "The two-way symmetrical model provides a normative theory of how public relations should be practiced to be ethical and effective" (p. 285). Yet, as they reported, numerous studies on the models have shown that press agency is the model most commonly practiced today. Fabiszak (1985), as reported earlier, found that press agency was the predominant model among public relations departments in hospitals.

Public Relations Roles

The public relations theory of roles was conceptualized and refined by Broom and Dozier (e.g., Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). As Dozier (1992), another IABC research team member, explained, whereas the public relations models delineate departmental and organizational behavior, the roles represent the daily behavior patterns of individuals. They are important theoretical concepts because they explain how people behave in carrying out their job responsibilities and predict the results of the action.

The two major roles are technician and manager. Practitioners enacting the manager role use formative and evaluative research in their work (Broom & Dozier, 1986). For example, they employ environmental scanning to monitor their organization's environment and help it manage relationships with strategic publics. Because they possess needed intelligence gained from research, managers are more likely to participate in the organization's decision making and

strategic planning. Practitioners enacting the technician role, on the other hand, are not part of the management team. Viewed by themselves and others as creative personnel, they are concerned with producing and implementing the various techniques used in public relations. Defined by Dozier and Broom (1995), a technician is "a creator and disseminator of messages, intimately involved in production, operating independent of management decision making, strategic planning, issues management, environmental scanning, and program evaluation" (p. 22).

Role theory helps explain the dichotomy of healthcare practitioners found by Kotler and Clarke (1987):

In some healthcare organizations where the potential of the public relations function is recognized, the public relations manager is a vice president and sits in on all meetings involving sensitive information and actions. . . . In many more organizations . . . public relations is a middle-management function charged with getting out publications and handling news and special events. The public relations people are not involved in policy or strategy formulation, only tactics. (p. 466)

A public relations department composed solely of technicians contributes little to organizational effectiveness. Its work lacks purpose and direction, and any impact is dependent on the planning and decisions of others outside the department. According to J. E. Grunig (1992), whereas technicians are found in every department, "managers are a necessary component of excellent departments" (p. 19).

Quantitative findings presented in the initial report of the Excellence Project (J. E. Grunig et al., 1991) showed that participation in critical management activities, especially strategic planning, is associated with the manager role and both the role and participation in such activities are characteristics of excellent public relations departments. In their latest report (Dozier et al., 1995), the project's researchers—drawing from further analysis of quantitative and qualitative data—ranked *knowledge* to enact the manager role as the most important of 20 key characteristics of excellence, followed by knowledge to practice the two-way symmetrical model and the two-way asymmetrical model. These top three variables, then, are pivotal to predicting which public relations departments are likely to contribute to overall hospital effectiveness.

Potential Versus Practice

Most previous studies have examined actual practice of the models and roles. The first study to measure a department's *potential* to practice them was conducted by Wetherell (1989), under the direction of J. E. Grunig, her thesis adviser at the University of Maryland. Potential was defined as the extent to which a public relations department or someone in the department has the expertise or knowledge to practice certain tasks that conceptually describe the models and roles. Drawing from previous work by Grunig (e.g., J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and Dozier (1983), Wetherell and Grunig developed 32 task items, 4 each to measure potential to practice the four models, the two major roles of manager and technician, and two minor roles—communication liaison and media relations.

Wetherell (1989) provided the rationale for measuring potential: "People cannot practice or even prefer what they do not know" (p. 201). Likewise, actual practice is an imperfect indicator of expertise and knowledge. Theory holds that many factors influence which model or role is practiced. For example, a power-control theory advanced by the IABC research team explains that organizations practice a particular model because the people who control the organization (i.e., the dominant coalition) choose that behavior (J. E. Grunig, 1992). In other words, a public relations department in a hospital may have high expertise on the two-way symmetrical model, but senior administrators' preference for the public information model means the department will spend most of its time generating brochures and newsletters, rather than managing relationships with strategic publics.

J. E. Grunig et al. (1991) adopted Wetherell's (1989) measures of potential for the Excellence Project. The measures were modified and reduced in number by Kelly (1994) for her study on nonprofits. Findings from these studies are reported later in the paper and compared to this study's findings.

Strategic Planning

According to Dozier (1992), a public relations department is most effective when headed by a manager who is knowledgeable about the two-way models and strategic planning. J. E. Grunig (1992) concluded from his review of the literature that excellent organizations plan strategically and excellent departments are integrated in the strategic-planning process. As pointed out earlier, empirical research has identified participation in strategic planning as a characteristic of both the manager role and excellent public relations departments. This important variable, then, is deserving of special attention in studies on departmental potential.

In most hospitals today, goals are formally established through the strategic-planning process (Simyar & Lloyd Jones, 1988). The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations requires hospitals seeking accreditation to develop a strategic plan and involve senior managers, board members, medical staff, and other concerned parties in the planning process (Flexner, Berkowitz, & Brown, 1981).

Strategic planning usually begins with establishment, or renewal, of the corporate mission (Flexner et al., 1981). From there, the organization assesses internal strengths and weaknesses, available resources, and conditions of the external environment. Choices are then outlined for short- and long-term goals and objectives before implementing strategies. The effectiveness of the chosen strategies and programs are later reviewed and evaluated.

The strategic-planning process allows an organization to integrate all of its components (Simmons, 1990). As a result, every decision made and action taken is congruent with the overall mission of the organization, and objectives and goals are systematically reached.

At the core of strategic planning is consideration for the external environment and factors that could affect the organization's ability to reach its goals (Flexner et al., 1981). Kotler and Clarke (1988) stressed that the more turbulent the external environment, the greater the need for

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a hospital to practice strategic planning. They asserted, "The character of an organization's environment is as much or more a determinant of its survival than the quality of its leadership" (p. 83). Grant, Mann, and Reczynski (1993) predicted, "In order to meet the needs of their changing organizations, health care leaders of the 1990s will embrace strategic planning as a key management function" (p. 7).

As J. E. Grunig and Repper (1992) argued, "If public relations makes organizations more effective by building long-term relationships with strategic constituencies, it is only a small logical jump to deduce that public relations must participate in the organization's strategic planning and that communication programs must be managed strategically to have that effect" (p. 117).

Hypotheses and Research Question

Based on the problem and the reviewed literature, the following five hypotheses and one research question were developed to guide this study:

- H1: The higher the public relations department's potential to practice the two-way models of public relations, the higher the hospital's overall effectiveness.
- H2: The higher the public relations department's potential to enact the manager role, the higher the hospital's overall effectiveness.
- H3: The higher the public relations department's potential to participate in strategic planning, the higher the hospital's overall effectiveness.
- H4: The higher the public relations department's potential to practice all four models, enact both major roles, and participate in strategic planning, the higher the hospital's overall effectiveness.
- H5: The higher the department head's level of formal education in public relations or communication, the higher the department's potential for excellence.
- RQ1: To what extent do public relations departments in hospitals differ from departments in other types of organizations in their potential to practice the four models and two major roles.

METHODOLOGY

The population for this study was the heads of public relations departments in all U.S. hospitals. Compiling a comprehensive list for sampling involved several steps. First, a written request was sent to the state hospital association of each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, asking for the names and addresses of all hospitals in its jurisdiction and, if available, the name of the senior public relations person for each facility. Thirty of the state associations responded. The researchers then contacted the American Hospital Association (AHA) and obtained the names and addresses of all member and nonmember hospitals by state. From the more than 6,500 hospitals on the AHA list, a sample of 500 was randomly selected. The hospital sample was then matched to listings provided by the 30 state associations to verify addresses and to identify the relevant senior public relations person. Hospitals for which a public relations person's name was not available were contacted by telephone. In all, 174 long-distance calls were made to produce a list of the sample that was as complete and accurate as possible.

All types of hospitals were included in the study: general medicine, surgical, rehabilitation, psychiatric, and so on. Similarly, no exclusions were made on the basis of ownership; for-profit, secular and religious nonprofit, and government hospitals were represented. Minimal restrictions and random sampling procedures helped ensure that the sample was representative of the population and that the study's findings would be generalizable.

Survey Instrument

A four-page questionnaire was designed and pretested in a pilot study of 50 hospitals in one Southern state, which resulted in some modifications. In January 1995, the questionnaire was mailed to the 500-member sample with a cover letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. A number was assigned to each case so that appropriate follow-up letters could be sent to those

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who had not responded after 10 working days. No other effort was made to identify respondents or their hospital.

Of the 500 questionnaires mailed, 7 unused questionnaires were returned for such reasons as the hospital no longer had a public relations department, which reduced the sample to 493. A total of 191 completed questionnaires was returned by March 1, 1995, for a response rate of 39 percent.

The survey instrument was divided into four sections. Questions in the first section dealt with demographics. For example, respondents were asked about their hospital's size, the size of the public relations department, the reporting structure, their gender, age, years of experience, salary, and education.

The second section consisted of 24 items measuring the department's potential to practice the four public relations models and the two major roles of manager and technician (4 items each). Of the 16 items measuring the models, 15 were adopted unchanged from J. E. Grunig et al. (1991) and Kelly (1994). One item for the two-way asymmetrical model was taken only from Kelly, who modified "get publics to behave as your organization wants" to "get publics to adopt behaviors that your organization wants them to adopt." The items measuring the roles also were taken from Kelly, who reduced the 16 items used by J. E. Grunig et al. (1991) to measure four roles to 8 that measure the two major roles. The 24 items used in this study are given later in the paper.

For the third section of the questionnaire, four original items were developed to measure the public relations department's potential to participate in strategic planning. Respondents were asked to what extent their department or someone in the department has the expertise or knowledge to: (a) create a public relations plan with goals and objectives, (b) serve as a member of the hospital's strategic management team, (c) help develop the hospital's business plan, and (d) be consulted by a strategic planning team.

Whereas the first three sections of the questionnaire dealt with the study's independent variables, the fourth and last section dealt with its dependent variable—organizational effectiveness. Four original items were developed to measure the performance of the hospital in the fiscal year previous to the study, as perceived by the respondent. Respondents were asked to choose a score that best described the degree to which their hospital had performed on the following items during the past year: (a) met its budget; (b) reached its long-term goals and objectives, as set forth in its strategic plan, or made significant progress toward reaching them; (c) reached its short-term goals and objectives, as set forth in its strategic plan; and (d) advanced its mission, as set forth in its mission statement.

An open-end fractionation scale used by Wetherell (1989), J. E. Grunig et al. (1991), and Kelly (1994) was adopted for this study to measure items in all but the first section. For the second and third sections of the questionnaire, respondents were instructed to think of 100 as the average rating a public relations department might have on a typical item and to choose any number above or below 100 that described the extent to which their department or someone in it has the expertise or knowledge to perform each task listed. Zero was the lowest possible score, meaning no expertise of the task, but respondents could go above 100 as high as they liked. For the fourth section, respondents were told to think of 100 as the average rating a hospital might have on a typical item and to choose any number above or below 100 that described the degree to which their hospital performed on the item during the last fiscal year.

Critics have expressed concern about respondents' understanding of the scale's open-endedness and the possibility for large standard deviations due to outliers (e.g., Torgerson, 1958). Yet, similar to previous studies, this study found that only 1 of 191 respondents commented on the scale's limitless range, and outliers did not appear to affect a normal distribution. At the same time, the scale usually results in a negative skew. To compensate, this study's researchers,

following the lead of others, computed the square root of responses to standardize scores and reduce the skew to a normal distribution.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) operating on the University of Southwestern Louisiana's IBM mainframe computer. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were calculated. Eight additive scales were constructed, one for each of the four models, the two major roles, potential to participate in strategic planning, and organizational effectiveness. In addition, a "super" scale of public relations excellence was created by adding standardized scores on the four models, two roles, and participation in strategic planning. Reliability tests were run for each scale. Several tests for normalcy were employed before computing Pearson correlation coefficients to exam linear relationships between variables. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to test the fifth hypothesis. In all analyses, the 95 percent rule was adopted to determine statistical significance.

RESULTS

Findings are reported in the following order. Demographics are presented first, followed by the reliability of the scales measuring the models, roles, potential to participate in strategic planning, and overall hospital effectiveness. Mean scores and standard deviations for each of the scales and its items are then given. Scores on potential to practice the models and roles are compared with scores from previous studies to answer the research question. Correlations between variables that relate to the hypotheses are reported. The super scale of public relations excellence is examined and its correlation with organizational effectiveness is presented. Finally, results are given for the ANOVA analysis, which determined if department heads with different levels of formal education in public relations or communication differed in their mean scores on the excellence scale.

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Demographics

Based on the 191 completed questionnaires, the size of U.S. hospitals varies greatly. The number of licensed beds ranges from 13 to more than 1,000, with a median of 165. The number of employees ranges from only 7 to more than 10,000, with a median of 600. These findings provide evidence that the study captured a representative cross section of hospitals in the United States. Adding to the evidence, respondents worked for hospitals in 49 states and the District of Columbia (Alaska was not represented in the random sample).

The typical public relations department employs two to four people, and 58 percent of the department heads report to the hospital's CEO. On average, the department head is a 42-year-old woman who has 11 years of public relations experience and earns \$41,000 to \$50,000 per year. Two-thirds of the heads (66%) have some college training in public relations or communication. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the respondents' formal education.

TABLE 1
Level of Formal Education in
Public Relations or Communication by
Percentage of Respondents

No Formal Training	18%
Some Continuing Education	16%
Some College Courses	29%
Bachelor Degree	28%
Master's Degree	8%
Doctoral Degree	1%

Reliability Measures

Because the findings of this study are dependent on the reliability of scales constructed to measure the seven independent variables and the one dependent variable, Cronbach's alphas were computed for the scales, which are reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Cronbach's Alphas for Indices
From Three Studies

Indices	Current Study Alphas	Kelly (1994) Alphas	J. Grunig et al. (1991) Alphas
Two-way Symmetrical Model	.79	.81	.73
Two-way Asymmetrical Model	.79	.83	.69
Public Information Model	.89	.79	.74
Press Agency Model	.88	.85	.84
Technician Role	.76	.75	.81
Manager Role	.84	.82	.84
Participation in Strategic Planning	.91		
Overall Hospital Effectiveness	.89		

As shown in Table 2, alphas for the eight indices used in this study are high, ranging from .76 for the technician role to .89 for the public information model and the hospital effectiveness scale. Alphas of .80 or greater indicate high reliability (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

The high alphas for the models and roles were not unexpected as the scales had previously proven reliable in Kelly's (1994) study. As shown in Table 2, the current study's alphas for the models and roles are about the same as or higher than those reported by Kelly and by J. E. Grunig et al. (1991). Somewhat less expected, the two scales original to this study, potential to participate in strategic planning and the organizational effectiveness index, yielded the highest alphas of all eight indices, .91 and .89, respectively. Repeated use of these scales in future studies would test their reliability. If alphas remain high, the two indices could make a valuable contribution to public relations research.

Means and Standard Deviations

Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for each scale and the items comprising it. The numbers reported are based on the fractionation scale discussed earlier. Scores, it is recalled,

are the square roots of responses for which respondents were told that 100 is the typical rating. Therefore, a mean score of 10—the square root of 100—represents an average rating.

For the public relations models, respondents scored above average on all four models; however, their scores on the public information and press agency models were substantially higher than their scores on the two-way models. In other words, public relations departments in U.S. hospitals have greater potential to practice the older one-way models than the more sophisticated two-way models.

Of the 16 model items, the two lowest mean scores were 8.33 for "negotiate with an activist group" and 8.46 for "manipulate publics scientifically," which measured potential to practice the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models, respectively. Standard deviations for both items were high, indicating great variation in responses (i.e., some departments have a great deal of expertise in performing these tasks, whereas others have very little).

The two highest mean scores were 14.28 for "get your organization's name into the media" and 13.71 for "prepare news stories reporters will use," which measured potential to practice press agency and public information, respectively. Mean scores and standard deviations for the models and items are given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations
on Potential to Practice
Four Models of Public Relations

Models	Mean	SD
Two-Way Symmetrical Model	10.55	3.00
Determine how publics react to the organization.	11.38	3.10
Negotiate with an activist group.	8.33	4.44
Help management to understand the opinion of particular publics.	11.95	3.82
Use theories of conflict resolution in dealing with publics.	10.50	3.97

Two-Way Asymmetrical Model	10.16	2.84
Get publics to adopt behaviors that your organization wants them to adopt.	10.45	2.65
Use attitude theory in a campaign.	9.81	4.11
Manipulate publics scientifically.	8.46	4.08
Persuade a public that your organization is right on an issue.	11.72	3.55
Public Information Model	13.51	3.43
Provide objective information about your organization.	13.41	3.24
Understand the news value of journalists.	13.68	4.16
Prepare news stories that reporters will use.	13.71	3.69
Perform as journalist within your organization.	13.30	4.57
Press Agency Model	13.17	3.25
Convince a reporter to publicize your organization.	13.58	3.51
Get your organization's name into the media.	14.28	3.68
Keep bad publicity out of the media.	11.81	3.73
Get maximum publicity from a staged event.	12.86	3.59

Similar to the models, respondents scored above average on both of the two roles; however, they scored higher on the technician role than on the manager role, 13.03 versus 12.08. Mean scores on all eight role items were above average. The highest mean score was 14.20 for "produce publications," under the technician role, and the lowest was 10.66 for "conduct evaluation research," under the manager role. Findings indicate that hospital public relations departments have slightly greater potential to act as technicians than as managers. Table 4 presents the figures.

TABLE 4
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations
on Potential to Enact
Two Public Relations Roles

Roles	Mean	SD
Technician Role	13.03	3.03
Coordinate a press conference or arrange media coverage of an event.	13.32	3.66
Produce publications.	14.20	3.77
Create and manage speakers bureau.	11.85	4.45
Take photographs or coordinate photography.	12.73	4.06

Manager Role	12.08	2.84
Manage people.	12.43	3.29
Conduct evaluation research.	10.66	3.29
Develop strategies for solving public relations problems.	12.81	3.79
Manage the organization's response to issues.	12.46	3.51

Respondents' mean score on potential to participate in strategic planning was relatively close to their mean score on the manager role (12.43 vs. 12.08), although the standard deviation on strategic planning was noticeably higher (3.88 vs. 2.84). In other words, there is greater variation on this managerial characteristic than on the collective tasks used to measure the manager role, such as "manage people." Table 5 presents the variable's mean scores and standard deviations, which indicate that public relations departments in hospitals have greater than average potential to participate in strategic planning, but that the potential varies among individual departments.

TABLE 5
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on
Potential to Participate in Strategic Planning

Index	Mean	SD
Participation in Strategic Planning	12.43	3.88
Create public relations plan with goals and objectives.	13.17	3.81
Serve as member of hospital's strategic management team.	13.16	4.19
Help develop hospital's business plan.	11.25	4.82
Be consulted by strategic planning team.	12.13	4.66

Respondents' mean score on the dependent variable, organizational effectiveness, indicates that U.S. hospitals were relatively effective the year before the study, as perceived by their heads of public relations. Mean scores on the scale and all four items comprising it were above average. Not surprisingly, the one item that had greater variation than the others was "met its budget." Table 6 reports the findings.

TABLE 6
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on
Overall Hospital Effectiveness in
Previous Fiscal Year

Index	Mean	SD
Overall Hospital Effectiveness	12.48	3.22
Met its budget.	12.32	4.26
Reached its long-term goals and objectives or made significant progress.	12.34	3.29
Reached its short-term goals and objectives.	12.42	3.19
Advanced its mission.	12.86	3.94

Regarding this study's research question, Table 7 reports mean scores on the four models and two roles from the current study and the studies conducted by Kelly (1994) and J. E. Grunig et al. (1991). Findings can be compared because all three studies used the same fractionation scale to measure potential of public relations departments to practice the models and roles.

TABLE 7
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on
Public Relations Models and Roles
From Three Studies

Models and Roles	Current Study Hospitals N = 191		Kelly (1994) Nonprofits N = 171		J. Grunig et al. (1991) All Org. Types N = 268	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Two-Way Symmetrical Model	10.55	3.00	10.17	3.24	8.90	3.30
Two-Way Asymmetrical Model	10.16	2.84	9.65	3.21	7.86	3.26
Public Information Model	13.51	3.43	13.50	3.48	11.43	3.12
Press Agency Model	13.17	3.25	12.58	3.15	10.59	4.32
Manager Role	12.08	2.84	11.72	2.96	11.11	2.94
Technician Role	13.03	3.03	12.74	3.09	9.89	3.10

As noted in Table 7, whereas this study concerned itself with public relations departments in hospitals, Kelly (1994) dealt with departments in nonprofits that had varied missions, including

the arts, education, and human services, and the IABC research team (J. E. Grunig et al., 1991) studied the public relations function in all types of organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Comparing mean scores from different population samples can be misleading; regardless, Table 7 shows that agreement exists among findings of the three studies, but discord also is evident.

Public relations departments in all the organizations studied have greater potential to practice the older one-way models than the more effective two-way models. Potential to practice the public information model is predominant among all organizations.

The consistent findings are quite different from those of multiple studies focusing on actual practice, rather than potential to practice. J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992) presented the results of 13 studies from the University of Maryland, which collectively showed that press agency is the model predominantly practiced. They concluded, "J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) were quite inaccurate . . . when they predicted that public information would be the most common model practiced. Studies based on samples of respondents from all types of organizations consistently show press agency to be the most common form of public relations public information generally is the lowest" (p. 305). They pointed to Fabiszak's (1985) study of hospitals as typical of research that found the press agency model predominant.

Furthermore, studies focusing on actual practice have not identified a dichotomy between predominant practice of the one-way models over the two-way models. A notable exception is Wetherell (1989), who—measuring practice, preference, and potential—found that practitioners predominantly practice the one-way models (most commonly press agency), but would prefer to practice the two-way models; yet their expertise and knowledge is greatest for the one-way models, predominantly public information.

As reported in Table 7, this study and Kelly (1994) found that public relations departments in U.S. hospitals and nonprofits have greater potential to enact the technician role than the

manager role, whereas J. E. Grunig et al. (1991) discovered opposite findings for the multinational organizations represented in their sample. The discrepancy could be due to the different populations, or it may be attributable to differences in methodology. The IABC researchers used a purposive sample, as opposed to the random samples used in the other two studies. Also, the IABC team originally measured four roles using four-item scales and then employed statistical analysis to collapse the roles to two, manager and technician, which were statistically identified by eight items each. In contrast, this study and Kelly (1994) used only two four-item scales to measure and analyze the two major roles.

J. E. Grunig et al.'s (1991) findings on role potential are an enigma. The University of Maryland studies—conducted by the Grunigs and their students—repeatedly have shown that the one-way models are empirically related to the technician role and that the two-way models are related to the manager role (Dozier, 1992). The linkages are consistent with theory, as argued by J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992). Therefore, potential to predominantly enact the manager role is incongruent with the IABC researchers' other finding that potential is greatest for the public information model. Furthermore, variations in mean scores on the items that statistically identified J. E. Grunig et al.'s (1991) two roles are substantially higher than those found in this study and in Kelly (1994).

It is possible that Kelly's (1994) reduced, four-item indices for the two major roles are not only more efficient, but also have greater validity than the measurement method used by Grunig et al. (1991). The shorter version also maintains high reliability (e.g., Cronbach's alpha for the manager role was .84 in both this study and J. E. Grunig et al.'s). Repeated use of Kelly's (1994) role indices, particularly in studies that also measure the public relations models, would help determine their research value.

This study's research question, then, can only be partially answered at this time. Public relations departments in hospitals do not differ from departments in other types of organizations

in their potential to practice the four models—all have the greatest potential to practice the one-way models, predominantly public information. Hospital departments also do not differ in role potential when compared to their nonprofit counterparts—both groups' expertise is highest for the technician role. However, both U.S. hospital and nonprofit departments do appear to differ from departments in all types of multinational organizations, whose expertise is highest for the manager role. Thus, the question of whether public relations departments in hospitals differ from departments in other types of organizations in their potential to practice the four models and two major roles cannot be fully answered with confidence. Further research is needed.

Linear Correlations

A histogram, normal plot, and detrended normal plot were computed before examining linear correlations to ensure that data met assumptions about normal distribution. These visual tests suggested normalcy with no skews.

To test the first hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed for the two-way models of public relations with the dependent variable, overall hospital effectiveness. A significant relationship was found at the .01 level for both the two-way symmetrical model ($r = .58$) and the two-way asymmetrical model ($r = .41$). The hypothesis, therefore, is confirmed, indicating that there is a positive linear relationship between potential to practice the two-way models and the effectiveness of an organization. Furthermore, as predicted by theory, the relationship is substantially stronger for the symmetrical model than for the asymmetrical model.

A correlation again was computed to test the second hypothesis. Potential to enact the manager role was correlated with the dependent variable, overall hospital effectiveness. A significant relationship was found at the .01 level ($r = .65$). Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that potential to enact the manager role is strongly related to organizational effectiveness.

A strong significant relationship at the .01 level also was found for the third hypothesis: The higher the public relations department's potential to participate in strategic planning, the higher the hospital's overall effectiveness ($r = .64$). The hypothesis, then, is confirmed, indicating that potential to participate in strategic planning is strongly related to organizational effectiveness.

To test the fourth hypothesis, a super scale of public relations excellence was first constructed by adding standardized scores on the models, roles, and potential to participate in strategic planning. Cronbach's alpha for the new scale was .96, which demonstrates very high reliability. The independent dummy variable was then correlated with overall hospital effectiveness. Results showed a significant relationship between the excellence factor and the dependent variable at the .01 level ($r = .68$). This was the strongest relationship found in the study. Table 8 summarizes the results of the correlation analyses.

TABLE 8
Pearson Correlation Coefficients of
Overall Hospital Effectiveness with
Five Independent Variables

Two-Way Symmetrical Model	.58
Two-Way Asymmetrical Model	.41
Manager Role	.65
Participation in Strategic Planning	.64
Excellence Scale	.68

Note: All correlations are significant at the .01 level.

One-Way Analysis of Variance

Mean scores on the public relations excellence scale were analyzed using ANOVA to test the fifth hypothesis: The higher the department head's level of formal education in public relations or communications, the higher the department's potential for excellence. This hypothesis was

included in the study because several studies have found positive correlations between the department head's public relations education and actual practice of the two-way models, and negative correlations with the one-way models (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992). By measuring formal education and testing its relationship to the excellence factor, the researchers hoped to identify an objective variable, as opposed to an inferred variable, that would predict high potential to contribute to organizational effectiveness. Such a convenient predictor would be valuable to the practice.

The six education groups listed in Table 1 were first reduced to five—no formal training, some continuing education, some college courses, a bachelor degree, and a master's or doctoral degree—to meet conditions of the test (i.e., the assumption of equal variances in all groups required that the few cases in the doctoral category be combined with master's cases). A Scheffe test showed that no two groups among the five were significantly different at the .05 level. As a result, the hypothesis is rejected, and the null is confirmed.

CONCLUSIONS

This study began with the premise that in today's healthcare arena, public relations departments in hospitals must have the ability to contribute to organizational effectiveness in order to survive budget cuts and help their organizations succeed. The purpose of the research was to identify characteristics that predict which public relations departments are likely to assist their hospital in meeting its budget, reaching its goals and objectives, and advancing its mission. It was argued that departments with high potential for excellence would be more valuable to their organization and, therefore, less likely to be downsized or eliminated. Toward this end, a number of significant and interesting findings emerged from the study.

Four of the five hypotheses were confirmed. Public relations departments that have the expertise or knowledge to practice the two-way models, especially the symmetrical model, enact

the manager role, and participate in strategic planning are more likely to contribute to organizational effectiveness than departments that lack the necessary knowledge or expertise.

Hospital practitioners, particularly heads of deficient departments, should take deliberate steps to acquire the skills and cognitive understanding associated with the predictor variables. For example, practitioners should learn how to conduct research, negotiate with publics, and use theories on conflict resolution and attitudes in their work. They should seek proficiency in principles of two-way communication and strategic planning. Study of the social sciences would increase their ability to develop problem-solving strategies and manage their organization's response to issues. Instead of mastering the production of techniques, such as news releases, publications, and speakers bureaus, practitioners should gain expertise in preparing programming and business plans—organized by goals and measurable objectives and grounded in strategy-based budgets.

There is no structured path for the prescribed action. Contrary to the advice of the IABC researchers (Dozier et al., 1995), programs of formal education housed in U.S. colleges and universities tend to teach concepts and skills associated with the less effective one-way models and technician role. One hypothesized reason is that many faculty members who teach public relations do not study it; their research interests are in fields other than public relations, such as journalism. As a result, new knowledge built through research, such as theories from the Excellence Project, generally does not make its way into the classroom.

Although degree discipline is an imperfect indicator of current research interests, it is revealing to note that 82 percent of the graduate-degree holders who are members of the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Educators Academy completed their graduate work in disciplines other than public relations (Sallot, Cameron, & Weaver-Lariscy, 1997). Furthermore, less than half of the Educators Academy members have earned a doctoral degree, which suggests

that many—if not most—public relations faculty lack the necessary skills to teach students how to conduct research.

Rejection of the fifth hypothesis in this study provides some evidence of the situation. Respondents who had college training in public relations or communication did not significantly differ from those who had no training when measured by potential for public relations excellence. Even those who had earned graduate degrees failed to differ from respondents who had never taken a college course in public relations or communication. At the same time, findings may be flawed by the variable's inclusion of communication education (i.e., a focus on just public relations might have yielded different results).

Regardless, public relations education will have little impact on increasing potential for excellence until hospitals and other organizations stop hiring people trained in other disciplines. Drawing from an earlier study they conducted, Sallot et al. (1997) recently reported that only 6 percent of the practitioners who are members of PRSA majored in public relations in college; 31 percent majored in journalism.

The fourth confirmed hypothesis raises conceptual and methodological issues in need of clarification. It is recalled that the excellence factor, which consisted of potential to practice all four models and both roles, as well as potential to participate in strategic planning, was significantly and strongly related to organizational effectiveness. The finding should not be interpreted as meaning that *practice* of press agency, public information, and the technician role contribute to organizational effectiveness. The dummy variable dealt with expertise on or knowledge about the models and roles—not their practice. As this study and Kelly (1994) found, public relations practitioners are most knowledgeable about the one-way models and the technician role. The findings are logical.

Practitioners usually start their careers as technicians. They initially are hired on the basis of their written and oral communication skills. Only a few progress to the role of manager,

which often entails supervising the technical aspects of the function. Practitioners are knowledgeable about press agency because it is the model predominantly practiced by the organizations employing them. The ongoing stream of former journalists and journalism students entering the field ensures high levels of knowledge to practice the public information model. Formal education programs reinforce all three variables.

Based on their most recent analyses, Dozier et al. (1995) reported that knowledge of the technician role, the press agency model, and the public information model generally is stronger in *excellent* public relations departments than in less-than-excellent departments. Stated another way, the greater the department's expertise to enact the manager role and practice the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models, the greater the department's expertise to enact the technician role and practice the press agency and public information models.

Dozier et al. (1995) explained the relationship by arguing that all departments need the technical skills associated with the older models and the lower-level role. "Even the most strategically managed department still must possess the expertise to implement communication programs, using the technical expertise within the department" (p. 55). However, superior knowledge of what the researchers referred to collectively as "traditional communication craft" (p. 58) is not enough to make a department excellent. "Departments that are missing the knowledge to play the manager role or practice two-way models lack a sense of direction. They churn out messages like perpetual motion machines" (pp. 58-59). To be excellent, then, public relations departments must have expertise in the two levels of models and roles.

The decision to include all models and both roles in this study's excellence factor reflects both logic and research-based theory. Contribution to organizational effectiveness must take into account all aspects of public relations' potential. Yet this comprehensive approach challenges common interpretation of findings from studies measuring potential. If traditional communication

craft is the foundation of all public relations departments, then mean scores on the one-way models and the technician role usually will be higher than scores on the two-way models and the manager role. Therefore, it is misleading to state, as this study did earlier, that public relations departments in hospitals have the greatest potential to practice the public information model and enact the technician role. Such conclusions ignore the add-on value of possessing knowledge beyond what researchers now consider a base. More rigorous analysis is needed.

Similarly, the incomplete answer to this study's research question underscores the need for innovations in methodology to assist theory building. Kelly's (1994) indices of role potential should be tested and refined. The two scales developed for this study, potential to participate in strategic planning and the overall effectiveness of organizations, also deserve attention. The first index may prove to be a powerful predictor of public relations excellence. The second might help researchers document the function's contribution to organizational success and survival—a relationship that both researchers and practitioners have long sought. Finally, more studies on potential are needed to help resolve current conflicts in findings.

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"Paychex PR: Does It Contradict the Excellence Study?"

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According to the International Association of Business Communicators Excellence Study, centralizing the public relations function and having the department represented by the top communicator in the dominant coalition contribute to an organization's excellence. But neither qualification is true in the case of Paychex, Inc., a multi-million-dollar payroll processing company in Rochester, N.Y. Can such an organization be considered excellent by IABC standards? And if so, can it continue?

MARTINO

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A. BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES

It is posited in the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Excellence Study (1991) that centralizing an organization's public relations function is preferable, and that having the department represented by the top communicator in the dominant coalition, "the group of individuals within an organization with the power to affect the structure of the organization, define its mission, and set its course through strategic choices the coalition makes" (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984), contributes to the department being excellent as well. Numerous studies have been conducted that examine the structure of the public relations function in organizations, reiterating these theories. It is true that some organizations do not have centralized public relations departments, and if they do carry out public relations, subordinate it to some other function.

Many studies, such as that of Astley and Sachdeva (1984), propose that public relations practitioners in organizations without public relations departments should achieve normative structures described above. They recommend that these public relations practitioners acquire power needed to make structural changes; practice "boundary spanning" (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), to collect and relay information about the organization's environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition and become experts on situations and "publics" (Grunig, 1992), groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals, to insinuate public relations into the dominant coalition; and finally, work with publics to solve a problem that's central to the organization's survival and growth. Seemingly, to be motivated to effect such structural changes, public relations practitioners must see a need for restructuring and be able to identify and solve problems which cannot ably be addressed in the function's present structure.

Does that need exist at Paychex?

B. RESEARCH PROBLEM

It is indisputable that Paychex, Inc., a multi-million-dollar payroll processing company in Rochester, N.Y., is excellent financially. The company's growth has been phenomenal, while other U.S. firms are downsizing and divesting. Paychex CEO B. Thomas Golisano is often cited in national business magazines for his winning formula.

But, does Paychex have a winning formula for public relations? As the IABC Excellence Study (1991) determined, excellent public relations departments contribute to organizational excellence. Yet, Paychex has no defined public relations department, and its top communicator does not serve on the dominant coalition. After 24 years of operation, the organization only recently hired a media relations person, and that position was originally intended to be part time.

Dozier and L. Grunig (Grunig, 1992, chap. 14) are among public relations scholars and theorists who agree that the public relations function should be centralized. They did not say, however, how such practitioners should "seek power elsewhere, through control of scarce and valuable resources" (Grunig, 1992, p. 411). Whether or not Paychex sees that its public relations function should be centralized and its top communicator on the dominant coalition are beyond the scope of this study. Rather, here it will be considered whether the function as it currently exists contributes to organizational effectiveness.

Beyond the placement and structure of the public relations function at Paychex, it is disputable if the organization is being equally served when some public relations activities are

conducted by staff other than public relations practitioners. Dozier's research (1981, 1984, 1986, 1987) showed the validity of boundary spanning, "to gather, select, and relay information from the environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition" (Grunig, 1992), and Robbins (1987, p. 192) showed how "network centrality," or being in the right place at the right time, for public relations practitioners proved true at Chrysler Corporation. But, what if boundary spanning is conducted by an organization's research function instead of public relations? If that information is broadly disseminated by public relations to senior administrators, is it any less valuable than if public relations practitioners gathered it themselves?

This exploratory case study will compare the normative public relations function as described in the Excellence Study, where the function is an integrated public relations department and has a direct reporting relationship to senior management, with the positive function at Paychex. The study will discuss how public relations at Paychex contributes to the organization considered excellent by the community; its employees; other corporations, outside the field as well as competition in it; the media; and its shareholders.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite impressive communications with internal employee stakeholders, "people who are linked to an organization because they and the organization have consequences on each other" (Grunig, 1992), at branch and sales offices in 94 cities nationwide, external communication with more than 140,000 certified public accountants who might refer clients to Paychex for services, and clip after clip of positive press about the organization, why hasn't Paychex deemed that a concerted public relations department is necessary? What works so well that Paychex has not seen the purpose of organizing such a department? Is Paychex prepared for the possible threat of activist groups and negative publicity? Are theories posited in the Excellence Study and public relations body of knowledge true in every case? Can there be exceptions, and is Paychex one?

To find the answers to these questions:

- advertising, media relations, and marketing practitioners at Paychex were interviewed to determine which of them serve in some public relations capacity;
- staff expertise that constitutes the core sphere of communication knowledge (IABC, 1991) at the company were identified, and some intuition was gained about a possible "demand-delivery linkage" (Dozier, 1995), a shared understanding of the role of the communications function in an organization, with senior management demanding communication excellence and the communication department delivering it;
- the model of public relations (Grunig, 1992) practiced at Paychex and whether communication is functional, unchanging as it flows outward, or functionary, changing depending on its effect (Bell and Bell, 1976), was determined;
- the organization's annual report, newsletters, news releases, and other publications were gathered and studied to determine how those materials are being used to further the company's public relations; and finally,
- Paychex's organizational culture, as it relates to public relations, was noted.

D. ORGANIZATION TO BE STUDIED

In 1970, B. Thomas Golisano had an idea. At the time, he was a sales manager at Electronic Accounting Systems (EAS) Inc., a Rochester-based payroll processing company with a client base of large companies, like most firms in the industry. The more employees clients had, the greater the revenue to its payroll processor. But, Golisano thought good business could also be had from serving smaller firms, and he noticed that there were plenty of them. "I found out that 98 percent of all American businesses have fewer than 200 employees," he said in a 1990 interview. "Nobody was interested in this market" (Barrier, 1990).

As Golisano predicted, payroll processors like EAS did not consider that smaller companies comprised a profitable market. As a result, payroll-processing firms imposed high minimum charges and offered services "too complex for a small employer" (Sack, 1994).

So, in 1971, Golisano left his job at EAS, and with \$3,000, "two months' worth of money for a two-year project" (Burlingham & Hopkins, 1988), started PayMaster, later to be called, appropriately, "Paychex." Golisano's marketing sense paid off. In only 11 years, the former one-employee proprietorship grew to rank eighth on an *Inc.* magazine list of the "500 Fastest Growing, Privately Held Companies in the U.S." In 1983, Golisano took Paychex public. In two more years, he would be named to a prestigious list of *Forbes* magazine's "People to Watch," and in 1989, an "Up and Comer" in that magazine. By this time, Paychex competitors were clamoring to have a piece of the pie of smaller clients they used to discount. The field's leader, Automatic Data Processing Inc. (ADP), wanted that pie the most.

In 1988, after Paychex experienced torrid growth, CEO Golisano was featured in *Inc.* magazine's article, "How to Build an Inc. 500 Company" (Burlingham & Hopkins, 1988). In it, he told editors Bo Burlingham and Michael S. Hopkins his formula. Golisano explained that "if a business can operate successfully in one city, it can generally operate and be successful in another city. So you find the formula to do it in city *A* and get a bunch of people to do it in cities *B* through *Z*. You set them up as entrepreneurs in their own businesses. Then you consolidate them into a single company, build that company, and take it public" (Burlingham & Hopkins, 1988).

In 1974, Golisano explained, his goal was to operate a successful business in Rochester. When a salesman he'd recruited at EAS and the employee of a client approached him about opening a joint venture in Syracuse, N.Y., and a franchise in Miami, Fla., respectively, the snowball effect, that would gain more and more speed each passing year, was begun. Golisano knew it.

"Over the next three years, I set up a total of 17 relationships -- 11 joint ventures and six franchises. All but one of the people came from Rochester, and they went to different parts of the country. I generally guaranteed them a two-, three-, or four-city territory" (Burlingham & Hopkins, 1988). Even Golisano's first wife got a franchise as part of their separation agreement (Burlingham & Hopkins, 1988). (She later retired and became one of Paychex's largest stockholders.)

In 1979, Golisano had 18 small companies in 22 cities, and after a pitch that involved stock allocations based on revenue, market potential, and how long each office had been in operation, 18 mergers took place simultaneously.

Like the customer service on which Golisano founded Paychex in 1971, it continues to be the company's hallmark. Paychex customers Bernard Deckman, owner of an automotive-oil

company, and Karen Barnum, an office manager at Deluxe Service Systems Inc., a janitorial company, explain:

“‘It was Excedrin headache No. 47,’ groaned Deckman, alone with his 15-person payroll. Now, for \$1.73 a check, Paychex calculates his payroll, prepares his checks, and completes his tax forms. Barnum had used ADP but says she could rarely get the same person on the phone twice. With Paychex, she says, ‘you deal with the same people all the time, and you really get to know them’” (Cowan, 1986).

Golisano has used incentives to entice payroll specialists to raise their output by raising performance standards as well as the pay, by 25 percent, for those who met them. Not only did that increase productivity, but employee turnaround also dropped 30 percent in six months (Cowan, 1986).

The company has expanded its services to clients by offering new ways for them to “outsource” employee record-keeping functions. In 1989, its most profitable new service, Taxpay, a payroll-tax program, was begun. With Taxpay, clients can have Paychex collect funds and pay appropriate authorities, indemnifying customers for any charges due to late payments. Over 105,000 Paychex clients, more than half, use the service, and in 1994, \$8.6 billion in payroll tax payments were made on their behalf (Paychex 1995 Annual Report, p. 11).

The Direct Deposit plan enables Paychex to transfer 37,000 of its business clients’ employee wages to savings and checking accounts (Paychex 1995 Annual Report, p. 11). Paylink, the newest service Paychex added to its payroll processing business, provides clients a way to send payroll information to Paychex, using a personal computer with a telecommunications link. In its first full year, 11,000 Paychex clients used Paylink (Paychex 1995 Annual Report, p. 11), and a new enhancement, Reportlink, enables customers to receive electronic reports Paychex prepares after each pay period, for use internally.

But, what good is a check that isn’t signed? Eighteen thousand Paychex clients took advantage of Paychex’s service last year to apply signatures to checks electronically, then place the checks in sealed envelopes (Paychex 1995 Annual Report, p. 12).

Recognizing that human resource services are closely related to payroll, Paychex instituted a whole gamut of services in 1991 with its new Human Resources Services Division. Paychex prepares employee handbooks, personnel forms, compliance kits, insurance services, section 125 plans like Flexible Spending Accounts and Premium Only Plans, and most recently, recordkeeping for 401(k) retirement plans.

The Paychex formula continues to work, and the snowball has been rolling uphill ever since. In November 1995, *Forbes* magazine listed the firm 56th of the “200 Best Small Companies in America” (Hardy & Kichen, 1995a) and one of only 20 companies on the magazine’s “honor roll” of “long-term repeaters” on the Best Small Companies list (Hardy & Kichen, 1995b). It continues to service small-company clients, with an average of 14 employees each (Welles, 1992), and Paychex has 94 U.S. offices in 34 states, servicing 215,000 business clients. The once fledgling, one-man operation employs more than 3,700 people nationwide. Its

stock, which opened in 1983 at \$2.17 a share (Martin, 1994) in 1994, had them selling at almost \$38 (Pooley, 1994), "about 31 times analysts' estimates of \$1.20-\$1.25 for fiscal 1995" (Gold, 1994b). The company is worth more than a billion dollars, trading at 10 times book value ("Forget Politics," 1994).

Golisano continues to be featured frequently in national business magazines for his expertise and successful formula for entrepreneurship, and all without a centralized public relations department or image consultant. He gets Paychex media attention without even trying, and, like other wildly successful entrepreneurs, sometimes taking big risks in the process. In 1995, for example, Golisano was a New York gubernatorial candidate on the Independence Fusion Party ticket he began with Rochester pollster Gordon S. Black, Ph.D. The campaign was a risk for Golisano (and Paychex) because throwing his hat in the ring threatened Republican George E. Pataki's challenge to three-term Democratic incumbent Governor Mario M. Cuomo (Martin, 1994; Sack, 1994). If Cuomo would win, Republican sentiment was that Golisano had split the anti-Cuomo vote. Inciting the angst of New York Republicans, especially in upstate Rochester, Golisano's home and the city in which Paychex is headquartered, may have had a negative impact on Paychex. It did not, in fact; Paychex stock rose 27 percent during the campaign.

But, as reported in *Inc.* magazine's "Forget Politics As Usual: We're Mad as Hell and We're Not Going to Take It Anymore," "more and more company owners enter the political foray with a zeal traditionally reserved for commerce." "What these entrepreneurs have done in the private sector, they are now doing in politics. They are taking the same values, temperament, and skills, and applying them to public affairs." This new activism is contrary to businesses' former edict: "The best thing government can do for my business is to stay out of my way" ("Forget Politics," 1994). Ironically, "the rationale for Golisano's third-party effort was that he wanted to govern 'like a CEO,' . . . and his basic premise (was that) [sic] voters wanted government to be run like a business" (Gallagher, 1995).

Increasing numbers of public relations practitioners, image consultants, and CEOs are realizing that lessons can be learned from public images of successful politicians (though Golisano got his political image because he *is* a politician). According to Clark Judge, a former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan, "it is vital that the public sees the CEO as human, not just as the product of a giant institution the public can't comprehend" ("CEO Image Building," 1989).

Practitioners of the press agency model of public relations would assert that no publicity is bad publicity and appreciate that every article mentioning Golisano's election bid -- and there were many -- also mentioned Paychex. But not all press attention Golisano gets is risky. His community involvement is impressive and includes his launching a mental-disability foundation and a campaign against teen pregnancy, and funding an anti-drug coalition.

With most of its new business referral-based -- from current clients and certified public accountants -- now Paychex's greatest threat is from "more personal computers and a plethora of software (that) [sic] give small businesses the ability to handle payroll and other accounting functions cheaply in-house (Gold, 1994a).

E. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Before discussing characteristics which might make excellent public relations excellent, it is important to understand the concept of "public relations." The "management of communication between an organization and its publics" (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6), public relations might be equated with communication management. The function includes such communication practices as media relations, research, employee communications, and issues management. It also should be noted that the "public" in public relations refers, as noted in Section A (p. 1) of this study, to specific groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals (Grunig, 1992), and not the "general public," often considered as everyone but the speaker, or particular organization in this case.

The body of knowledge about the public relations function is extensive, and the Excellence Study by J. Grunig et al. in 1991, for the International Association of Business Communicators, determined that "excellent" public relations programs exhibit certain characteristics. Through the program, departmental, and organizational levels, the public relations program will:

- be managed strategically
- be integrated into a single public relations department
- have direct reporting relationship to senior management
- practice the two-way symmetrical model of public relations
- have the potential for excellent public relations, as indicated by
 - knowledge of the symmetrical model
 - knowledge of the managerial role
 - academic training in public relations
 - professionalism
- have equal opportunity for men and women in public relations
- have a two-way symmetrical worldview, or vision, for public relations
- have a public relations director in the dominant coalition
- exist within a participative organizational structure
- exist in an organic organizational structure
- exist in a turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups

Three spheres of communication excellence were also proposed in the Excellence Study (1991). The core is comprised of practitioners' knowledge of advanced symmetrical communication practices; the middle sphere, which encompasses the core, demand-delivery linkage, or shared expectations about communication with senior management; and the outermost sphere, organizational culture.

In his 1992 study, Grunig introduced the theory of public relations models:

- press agency, when organizations seek publicity in whatever form;
- public information, where journalists in residence produce and distribute only positive information;
- two-way asymmetrical, involving some research to determine which messages have the greatest probability of enlisting publics to behave as the organization wants; and
- two-way symmetrical, using research to determine which compromises could produce win-win situations for both publics and the organizations.

Grunig maintains that the two-way symmetrical model is practiced by excellent public relations departments. Positively, however, a "mixed-motive" model (IABC, 1991), involving the short-term use of the two-way asymmetrical model within a broader symmetrical worldview, is more practical, also producing the desired win-win solution for organizations and their publics.

Like the concept of asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews of public relations, the former being "something that organizations do to publics" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992) and the latter involving compromises, Bell and Bell's (1971) theory of functionary and functional public relations also describe how public relations might be practiced. "Functionary" public relations is described as information flowing outward from the organization to the environment's interpenetrating systems which "affect the survival and growth of organizations by allowing them (or not allowing them) to exist and operate, by providing (or not providing) needed system inputs, and by utilizing (or not utilizing) system outputs" (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 141). Once sent, the organization remains relatively uninformed about their effects. Functional public relations practitioners, on the other hand, are proactive and ready to change the organization's communications, depending on their effects on interpenetrating systems in the environment. Furthermore, those practitioners work closely with the dominant coalition to anticipate problems and change the organization to either maintain "homeostasis" (Grunig, 1992, chap. 14) in the organization or adapt itself through a process called "morphogenesis" (Grunig, 1992, chap. 14) to changes in the environment.

While there is no ideal structure for the public relations function in organizations, following open-systems theory (Dozier & Grunig, 1992, chap. 14), which recognizes that an organization must deal with interpenetrating systems from a sometimes turbulent environment, in contrast to a closed-systems perspective, that the organization is autonomous of its environment, the public relations function must:

- have access to management decision making, because organizational decisions create publics, and top communicators must continually be apprised of situations which might affect publics as they occur;
- be structured in an integrated unit to be most effective; and
- have a dynamic horizontal structure that would accommodate public relations problems as they arise.

Open-systems theory holds that like external environments, environments within organizations may also be turbulent. It is necessary, then, for an organization's managerial subsystem to assign enough organizational resources to the adaptive subsystem, which includes public relations, to manage problems with internal publics -- employees, for example. Thus, says open-systems theory, the adaptive subsystem, including public relations, must be linked closely with its organization's managerial subsystem.

F. CASE STUDY METHOD

Why a case study? "Using multiple sources of evidence" (interviews with an organization's public relations practitioners and studying their work), "the case study is an empirical inquiry to investigate a contemporary phenomenon" (benefits of public relations), "within its real-life context" (a U.S. organization, Psychex, Inc.) "in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1984).

Following Rubin's suggestion (1984), these multiple sources of data, gained from open-ended and focused interviews and documents, will help to understand the importance of having a decentralized public relations function at Paychex and improve the reliability of the study so as not to depend on only one form of analysis.

Criticisms of the case study method include, as Yin suggested, that "too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the . . . findings and conclusions" (1984, p. 21). In addition, other problems of case studies -- having the expanse of data be intimidating and difficult to analyze, and having the study be too time-consuming and difficult to generalize from and to summarize -- are not difficult to imagine.

G. RATIONALE FOR THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Mostly open-ended questions were used in the protocol, to understand more fully practitioners' concepts of public relations. While questions were posed in commonly understood terms, not the language used by scholars and theorists of public relations -- "dominant coalition," "top communicator," and "boundary spanning," for example -- questions were intended to provide information specifically regarding those topics.

Once it was determined which public relations practitioner was the top communicator, that question was omitted from other interviews. The same was true of questions regarding CEO Golisano's interest in the organization's public relations and his interaction with the top communicator. These questions, of her, also helped determine if a demand-delivery linkage (See Section E, p. 6) exists.

The protocol was also designed to determine if Paychex public relations practitioners had a sense of the organization's stakeholders -- any group affected by, or that affects, the organization -- and then, its publics (See Section A, p. 1), by asking them to imagine which, if any, groups might be negatively affected by Paychex. When it was realized that a staff member in marketing planning/research conducted research which might be considered a boundary spanning (See Section A, p. 1) activity, that person was interviewed as well, and information was then sought to determine her involvement in public relations.

Using a multiple-choice question, interviewees were asked how they practice public relations, and it was determined if different practitioners employ different models. To ensure that the correct choice was made, participants were also asked to explain their selection.

Few questions were asked to learn how and if the organizational culture might determine the structure and function of Paychex's public relations. Because an organized public relations "department" does not exist, interviewees were asked if they met as a group.

H. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES TO BE USED

Interviews were conducted with Paychex's top communicator, who oversees both advertising and public relations, those on her staff who practice public relations, a senior technical writer, and marketing research practitioner. Both in-person and telephone interviews were conducted, and interviewees were given the opportunity to revise their statements and provide additional insights. Some interview questions were specific, but most were open-ended to learn more, beyond the scope of specific answers. Interviewees volunteered information and provided

materials, including newsletters to stakeholders, such as employees and certified public accountants; annual and quarterly reports to shareholders; and news releases, for examination.

In addition to information provided by Paychex staff, a wealth of newspaper and magazine articles was reviewed. Many of those materials are referenced throughout the study.

I. DATA ANALYSIS

In lieu of a survey, quantifiably measuring participants' responses, Paychex case study participants were interviewed instead, to acquire more information and to realize practitioners' concepts of the organization's public relations. Through in-person and telephone conversations, more information was gained than would have been provided in the technique previously mentioned. Case study participants' answers and information gained from Paychex documents and newspaper and magazine articles formed the basis of a comparison with the normative theory of public relations, as described in the IABC Excellence Study, and with other theories in the public relations body of knowledge.

J. RESULTS

The structure of Paychex's public relations function contradicts characteristics which the IABC Excellence Study proposed make an organization's communications excellent and contribute to organizational excellence. Through the case study, it was determined that the public relations function at Paychex is not centralized, but certain tasks are successfully carried out by staff in the advertising and marketing planning/research departments. The organization's top communicator does not serve on the dominant coalition, nor does she report directly to the CEO. The top communicator is represented on the dominant coalition by her division vice president and "gets involved when they want to have something written, like the mission statement, or have something published."

Paychex CEO Golisano does consult the top communicator, however, on matters which might affect Paychex public relations. Regarding publicity for a pilot project the company is operating in its Miami and Chicago markets, for example, she said, "Tom thinks it's premature to give a lot of information about the project because competitors might mirror it, and Paychex customers outside of those cities might also try to seek more information about it."

One communicator, practicing the public information model of public relations (See Section A, p. 6), maintains an enviable resource of articles about the company, its services, and its history, to provide media upon request. Occasionally, media in cities where Paychex offices are located nationwide will ask local Paychex representatives for information about the company or its services. (Often, too, Paychex staff at those offices will generate stories.) In all cases, information requests are made of this public relations practitioner in Rochester, and she draws upon her wealth of articles, sometimes tailoring stories to particular requests, such as one that might discuss why companies would outsource services, using payroll as an example. Other stories might provide information on selecting a payroll service and never mention Paychex directly. When requests are made for articles the practitioner does not have, they become the basis for new stories. The communicator sees her role as distributing only positive information about the company.

She summarized the company's mission: "Small business owners are busy people. When they're in a start-up stage, they fight for time to get everything done, and many business owners tend to use a lot of old-fashioned methods to do that. Paychex sells peace of mind so business owners can put their minds back into the business, where it really belongs."

A coordinator was hired in September 1996 to focus more organizational resources on media relations. Intended to be part time, the position was revised not long after the specialist began, when the organization recognized the benefits of concerted and proactive media relations.

In November of that year, for example, the media relations coordinator arranged for a Paychex vice president to be interviewed for NIKKEI newspapers. The publicity was a first for Paychex in Japan, and with a distribution of three million, the story not only brought more attention to the company from those outside of it, but inside Paychex, to its public relations function, as well.

A favorable editorial and full-page cover story appeared in Rochester Gannett newspapers on the company, heralding its upcoming 25th anniversary, excellent industry reputation, and the company's new Asset Card service, "an experimental debit card that allows employees without conventional checking accounts to have their pay deposited directly into an electronic bank account" (Zelickson, 1995). Cited in that article, State University College at Geneseo economics professor David Martin remarked about Paychex, likely making Rochester-based magnates, Eastman Kodak Company, Bausch & Lomb, and Xerox Corporation, wince: "It's a question of getting in there and doing it better than your competitors. If we look at their track record, no one has done it better. It's Rochester's most successful growth company" (Zelickson, 1995).

The NIKKEI and Zelickson articles are fine examples of proactive media relations by a Paychex public relations practitioner. He has also employed the same initiative, contacting area business publications to generate interest about the company, when the company sought expansion into Las Vegas, its newest market and the only one in Nevada.

The media relations coordinator and top communicator saw their roles in public relations as two-way asymmetrical (See Section E, p. 6), using research to determine which Paychex messages would have the greatest probability of working. "It's not true-public relations to generate only positive things about the company," the top communicator said. "It's certainly necessary to do research in order to determine where the company might be of service to people to know about your business, where it fits in the community." The media relations coordinator suggested that informal research he conducts regards what is timely and of interest to media, deciding which Paychex products would meet media's needs. His primary goal is to get the word out.

Because of the organization's rapid financial growth and its charismatic CEO, getting the word out is not often difficult, when prestigious national business journals, like *Inc.*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune*, approach the company for stories. In Rochester, too, media are attracted to the success story and "local boy done good," and Golisano's community involvement and political aspirations further that. But, with four percent of the market, the company finds getting publicity more of a challenge outside those circles. "The trick is outside of Rochester," the top communicator suggests, "where the Paychex name isn't as familiar, and Paychex must work to generate that awareness."

As mentioned above, not all public relations activities are centralized in the advertising department either, and no efforts are currently being made to effect structural changes Astley and Sachdeva advise in their 1984 study (See Section A, p. 1). While research about the organization's environment is conducted, that function is a joint venture between the marketing planning/research and advertising departments. Marketing research staff monitor and compile information on Paychex competitors, relay it to advertising, where it is typeset and distributed monthly to senior management. It is unclear whether public relations practitioners, who serve other functions in the advertising department, participate in this activity, and because the practitioners have not identified their organization's publics, the research is not boundary spanning in the sense that public relations scholars intend. The purpose of boundary spanning is to become experts on the organization's publics.

When asked about Paychex's publics, case study participants could not conceive of any reason why groups, other than competitors, would take issue with the company. More significant, they thought, are customer complaints, and the top communicator said that the organization is diligent about surveying its clients and responding expeditiously to their concerns. "Paychex surveys its customers about level of service," she said, "whether service and tax payments are accurate, in terms of economy, accuracy, and efficiency. Management thinks that feedback is good." The only crises participants could suggest that might evoke issue with outside groups were natural disasters, and a management plan is in place if those occur, replete with customer communications, phone stickers, and back-up processing centers.

Regarding research, the marketing planning/research practitioner added that certified public accountants, a primary source of client referrals for Paychex, are routinely surveyed, in addition to Paychex clients, asked opinions of and perceptions about current Paychex products and potential offerings. In addition, she said, she serves as a "fact-checker, statistics provider, and technical (internal) consultant" when public communication is required.

K. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

"In a very broad sense of 'public relations,' it really boils down to if we all do our jobs effectively, and we provide quality products and quality service . . . ultimately, we affect the bottom line." That philosophy of the senior technical writer seems to pervade Paychex, from employees' sleek manner of dress to the perfectly mowed lawn, with nary a blade of grass out of place. But, what of traditionally structured public relations departments?

The senior technical writer's comment about the team spirit at Paychex seems indicative of total quality management: "Paychex is a very dynamic environment. There are many small project teams at work, performing certain functions for the company, but always with a grand vision of the whole company being the team. Every one of the employees is a 'PR person.'" That same open, team approach is evident, too, in public relations.

Unlike public relations departments in authoritarian organizational cultures, where practitioners and top communicators covet media contacts, with the participative concept at Paychex, the top communicator and public relations practitioners at Rochester headquarters do not seem to mind. Indeed, recognizing the impracticality of having public relations practitioners in 94 offices, they welcome and encourage the publicity. Centralizing the public relations function

in Rochester also ensures that the same, accurate information is being distributed to media, from the Boston *Globe* to the Los Angeles *Times*.

The open and dynamic organizational culture might explain why the company has not yet seen a need for a centralized public relations department. The top communicator and public relations practitioners do not seem intent to acquire power to effect structural changes, as Astley and Sachdeva (1984) recommended (Section A, p. 1). Neither does the top communicator serve on the dominant coalition, and she was not asked if she feels, because she does not, that she is unable to provide the level of managerial expertise she may desire. (As she holds a baccalaureate degree in graphic arts/photography, and not advanced education specifically in public relations, and since no members of Paychex's dominant coalition were interviewed, it was not determined if a demand-delivery linkage [See Section E, p. 6] might exist.) Currently, the top communicator primarily serves the dominant coalition in a technician, or support, capacity, providing writing expertise when needed.

It seems that neither public relations practitioners, in the Division of Marketing, nor the company has yet seen a real need for public relations -- in the sense described by J. Grunig & Hunt (1984, p. 6) -- one that is distinct from marketing. In his book, *Excellence in Public Relations and Communications Management*, editor J. Grunig explains why marketing theory is inadequate for public relations: because "the major purpose of marketing is to make money" by selling an organization's goods and services, and that of public relations is to "save money by building relationships with publics that constrain or enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission"; because customer markets do not have to buy the organization's products, whereas publics often cannot avoid the consequences of an organization's behavior; and because strategies in marketing -- such as product, price, and promotion -- are seldom useful in strategic public relations (Grunig, 1992, p. 20).

Public relations practitioners in profit and not-for-profit organizations alike can be unfamiliar with the concept of publics (See Section A, p. 1). In interviewing practitioners at Paychex, it was evident that conceivably, the "groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals" (Grunig, 1992) are perceived more in a marketing sense than in a public relations one. Using Paychex CEO Golisano's oft-used catch phrase, the "bottom line" is the client base.

A multitude of publics might seriously affect organizations. Ecological groups, for example, are an important public of which oil companies must be conscious, and the Exxon Valdez accident in the 1980s is a good example of how public disregard might negatively affect the entire industry. It is also inherent that in some businesses, more publics might arise for some reason. When Nestlé Company attempted to market infant milk formula in developing nations, the results were malnourishment, illnesses, and even infant deaths, when the formula was mixed with contaminated water. The crisis drew the ire of a multitude of groups worldwide, and in 1981, a regulation by the World Health Organization of marketing activities for infant formula.

Since no activist uprisings have negatively affected Paychex in the company's brief history, and it being difficult to imagine how a payroll-processing company might incur such activist publics, as might the companies just mentioned, for example, there has been no effort to identify such groups. Because boundary spanning activities seem focused on Paychex's competitors, it serves to assist the company in its marketing plan rather than in strategic public relations

management. Since publics have not been identified, communication is asymmetrical (See Section E, p. 16), and public relations is functional (See Section E, p. 17).

"If the public relations function is scattered as a support activity throughout various subsystems of the organization, public relations may not be an integral part of the adaptive subsystem" (Dozier & L. Grunig, 1992, chap. 14, p. 401). It may be that Paychex's TQM management style and organizational culture affect the need for formalized public relations, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

As Paychex, Inc. begins its future and the 21st century, if State University College at Geneseo David Martin's prediction (Zelickson, 1995) is correct, that the company might expand beyond its niche market and acquire larger business clients, the company should identify its present stakeholders and begin two-way communication practices now. If, as Martin said, it is not inconceivable that Paychex could "make an offer to the state of New York to take over its payroll and benefits," then Paychex may have a multitude of new stakeholders and publics with which to communicate. Then, public relations might affect the bottom line.

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**Exploring an IMC Evaluation Model :
The Integration of Public Relations and Advertising Effects**

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ABSTRACT

**Exploring An IMC Evaluation Model:
The Integration of Public Relations and Advertising Effects**

This paper is to establish the relationships among variables in corporate communications, especially between public relations and advertising, and to conceptualize an evaluation model for integrating the effects of communication activities in the context of integrated marketing communication (IMC).

For the model setup, the weakness and need of IMC evaluation are delineated. For testing, a new approach for integrating effects of communication activities is introduced and the IMC evaluation model is specified.

Introduction

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and Integrated Communications: Advertising and Public Relations (ICAP) have been buzz-words of the 90s (Miller & Rose, 1994). Overheated and somewhat malicious debates have caused deeper misunderstandings and misinterpretations of IMC.¹ A so-called "turf war" among public relations, advertising, and marketing scholars has obstructed the productive discussion of new trends and the application of new strategic approaches (Duncan, Caywood, & Newsome, 1991; Ehling, White, & Grunig, 1992; Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

In the advertising literature (Duckworth, 1991), the role of advertising is clearly said to manipulate the consumers' perception related to a brand. However, the majority of public relations scholars strongly negate the function related to manipulating the public. They insist that manipulation is a one-way communication and only used in the primitive publicity and public information stage (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

In fact, understanding between public relations and advertising is a key to the development of IMC. Advertising and public relations are basically discrepant on how to approach the consumer. However, reconciliation can be possible in the state of evaluation because the ultimate aim of public relations and advertising is the same in the context of the bottom-line impact in spite of different strategies and approaches.

In a real world, competitive practitioners from both fields have utilized the new approach and added services for clients, rather than adhering to a tradition (Niederquell, 1991;

¹ IMC represents both IMC and ICAP. However, the integration of public relations and advertising is dealt with mainly in this paper for the simplicity of model development even though all communication and marketing activities are mentioned in literature review. Advertising denotes all marketing activities.

Strenski, 1991; Tortorici, 1991; Novelli, 1990). IMC also has become a famous word among practitioners despite of theoretical debates among academicians. This study is one which aims at the coordination of theory and reality, as well as the search for the reconciliation between both sides.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the relationships among variables in IMC and to conceptualize the IMC evaluation model to integrate the effects of communication activities. This effort, in the long run, may contribute on the needed reconciliation between public relations and advertising.

Literature Review

Public relations dependent variables

On the program level, Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1977) designated independent variables (conflict process, structure of community, structure of communication channels) and dependent variables (understanding, attitudes) in community relations. In fact, these cognitive types of dependent variables have dominated evaluation research in the program level.

Hon (1997a) interviewed 32 practitioners and 10 organization heads and revealed the importance of public relations in the organizational level. In those interviews, attributes of public relations effectiveness were defined by risk management, building relationships, media relations, earning respect, increasing understanding, goal achievement, affecting legislation, and disseminating messages.

From the results of Hon's (1997a) interviews, this research considers building relationships and earning respect as two major dependent variables for public relations'

effectiveness. In fact, other dependent variables can be achieved through building relationships and earning respect. Relationships can include relationships with media, government, and stakeholders. Also, increasing understanding, disseminating messages, and issue management are all attributes of obtaining good relationships. In another study conducted by Hon (1997b), the CEOs argued that the ultimate goal of public relations is "communicating the image of the organization."

Grunig (1993) suggested three dependent variables of public relations effectiveness: image of the public, relationship with stakeholders, and satisfaction with employees. Because of bad connotative meanings in the public relations field, he replaced 'image' with 'symbolic relationship.' He used symbolic relationship as the object of the micro-level public relations, and behavioral relationship as the object of the macro-level public relations.

Corporate image represents the summed perception of an organization (Marken, 1990). Public relations academicians often do not like to use the term 'image' due to its manipulative meaning (Grunig, 1993; Cutlip, 1991). Instead, they use 'reputation' as the better term instead of corporate image. Thus, as one of public relations goals, reputation is suggested as a key dependent variable of public relations activities (Hon, 1997b; O'Neill, 1984).

Based on the previous discussions, a proposition is established (see also Figure 1):

P1) The level of public relations activities has a positive relationship to the reputation of the company.

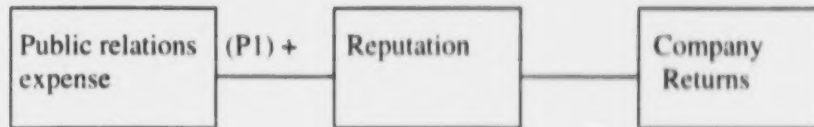


Figure 1. The process of public relations evaluation in the organizational level

Advertising dependent variables

Among possible dependent variables, brand equity was chosen as the most embracing variable in this paper. Brand equity has been the focus of marketing research and advertising research (Aaker, 1991; Aaker & Biel, 1992; Cobb-Walgren, Ruble & Donthu, 1995). Brand equity can be defined as the "added value" of a brand for a product.

From the consumer's perspective, brand equity is the cumulative image of the brand. The consumer's attitude is affected by many attributes including the company image (Biel, 1992). Also, brand equity includes consumers' brand image, loyalty, and all nonconventional asset values. Thus the concept of brand equity embraces consumers' psychological judgment such as willingness to pay for a branded product and all image factors (Biel, 1992). In a broad sense, the company's image and brand image can go together from the view of the consumer. Brand equity, including the company's image in the consumer's perspective, contributes to the company's financial valuation at the end.

Related to psychological proxies for sales (variables which precede sales, such as awareness, preference, and attitude), brand equity can be enhanced through "brand association, perceived quality, and use experience" by advertising activities (Simon & Sullivan, 1993, p. 33). Also, advertising affects consumers' perceptions and cognition

about the product (Hoch & Ha, 1986; Aaker & Shansby, 1982), brand preference (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995), attitudes (Farguhar, 1989), and intention to purchase (Nelson, 1974; Cobb-Walren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995). Advertising activities increase the value of brand equity through diverse psychological processes.

In his conceptualization of customer-based brand equity, Keller (1993) emphasized the effect of brand knowledge on traditional outcome measures such as sales and profitability. Brand knowledge includes brand awareness and brand image. From the consumers' perspective, brand equity as psychological indicators and sales as the outcome of actual behaviors are closely related.

Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu (1995) tried to integrate the psychological and physical effects of advertising and other information sources using brand equity. Previous research related to brand equity has been divided into two methodologies of measuring brand equity: financial valuation or consumers' psychological features such as brand image, brand association, preference, and attitude (Aaker, 1992).

In Cobb-Walgren et. al. (1995), the advertising expense and the level of brand equity showed a positive relationship. However, brand equity was used as a mediating variable for measuring brand preference and purchase intention in their study. Their conceptualization started with the relationship of advertising, brand equity, and sales, but did not report the relationship of brand equity-sales in the analysis.

The goal of advertising is to enhance the brand value among consumers or increase brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Aaker & Biel, 1992). Also, the direct function between brand equity and the company's bottom-line could be established because brand equity includes

both the psychological and economic meanings.

In clarifying the volume of brand equity, advertising texts insist that brand equity usually enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing activities and provides more margins due to higher perceived quality and brand royalty as its firm-side advantages (Aaker, 1992; Belch & Belch, 1995).

Based on previous discussions, a proposition is established (see also Figure 2):

P2) The level of Advertising expenses has a positive relationship to brand equity of the brand which is the target of advertising activities.

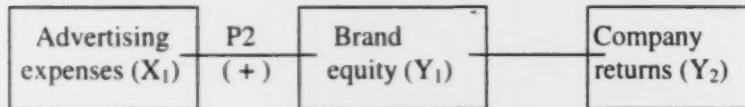


Figure 2. A model showing the relationships between advertising expenses, brand equity, and the company's returns.

Debates Over Integration

Public relations and advertising practitioners normally have different strategic approaches on consumers or publics (Neisser, 1997). In fact, the discrepancy between public relations and advertising lies in the different approaches toward consumers or publics. Public relations uses advertising in a different way such as issue advocacy and special events in a more non-profit way (Belch & Belch, 1995). Also, public relations involves issue management, community involvement, and social responsibility.

In fact, the mainstream of public relations have harshly criticized IMC and the Kotler and Mindak's (1978) gesture of integrating two functions (Ehling, White, & Gruing, 1992). There are three reasons for opposing the integration of marketing and

public relations in the organizational level: public relations autonomy, not-for-profit missions of public relations, and pressure from publics (Ehling, White, & Grunig, 1992). They negate disparagingly the overlapping functions between marketing and public relations.

Since the Kotler and Mindak's (1978) discussion about the relationship between marketing and public relations, the situation has not been improved. Marketing professionals are more aggressive in incorporating public relations as one of IMC activities. Public relations researchers are more defensive in introducing IMC as a new approach to public relations.

Need for Integration

Clients. IMC is needed also from the viewpoint of clients (Novelli, 1989-90). Competitive clients insist the maximized synergy effect of all communication activities. Advertising and public relations practitioners should at least display their readiness of integration effort upon clients' requests.

Consumers and publics. IMC is also needed from the viewpoint of consumers or publics (Duncan, & Everett, 1993). IMC is reorganizing communication activities by the way consumers or publics look at the activity (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993). Advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and direct mail can be called consumer/public-oriented communication. In fact, consumers or publics see one whole picture based on what they feel, see, and hear. In fact, all communication activities are already unified in consumers or publics' minds.

Messages. In the context of messages, there are four kinds in IMC: planned messages, inferred messages, maintenance messages, and unplanned messages

(Moriarty, 1994). The planned messages are the organization's controlled messages such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct mail and other promotional activities. However, no one department in the company takes responsibility for the other three messages. Instead, IMC integrates all the messages coming out of the organization. Those integrated efforts increase the synergy of all messages and resolve conflicts among marketing communication messages from different sources by the consistency and interactivity (Moriarty, 1994). For example, the company's reputation, consumer satisfaction from employees' good services, and the control of crisis situations all can be the inferred messages, the maintenance messages, or the unplanned messages. Without considering those messages, communication activities are not complete.

The bottom line impact. The companies' current communication activities are striving for effectiveness and efficiency (Gonring, 1994). Without applying the same criteria applied in other fields, communication activities cannot prove themselves against their contribution to organization goals with the resulting impact for the bottom-line. IMC brings these perspectives together and displays how to communicate with consumers and publics in an integrated way. Thus, IMC evaluation can be more unified for the company's bottom-line than the evaluation of each communication activity and can be measured with all integrated effects. Since IMC is measuring the unified effectiveness and efficiency of communication activities, the ultimate goal of IMC evaluation can be defined as the impact on the bottom-line (Gonring, 1994).

The changing role of marketing. The role of marketing has been changed drastically from the profit maximization paradigm to strategic partnerships with consumers (Webster,

1992). The differentiation rule of whether its goal is pursuit of profit or not between marketing and public relations has lost its ground. The new marketing activities emphasize consumer partnership. This kind of relationship management and negotiation processes need the types of help that may come from public relations. Relationship and negotiation are definitions, stemming from public relations (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Webster (1992) argued the changing role of marketing at three distinct levels: the corporate, business, and functional or operating levels. Especially on the corporate level, the role of marketing managers became close to that of public relations practitioners.

The Weakness of Previous IMC Evaluation

Public relations as marketing. The weakness of the previous IMC approach is too much emphasis on the promotional function of public relations (Belch & Belch, 1995). The criticism from the public relations scholars about IMC originated from the gap between public relations as a tool of promotional mix and public relations as a management function (Miller & Rose, 1994).

Some marketing scholars thought the changing role of public relations should be to increase the power of marketing ability by making use of some public relations functions such as media tours, publication, product publicity, and article placement (Nakra, 1991; Strenski, 1991). This perception may as well be called "marketing dominance." IMC is to integrate communication activities to enhance the company's communication capacity to a full extent. However, by just utilizing the publicity function or the marketing function, benefits of public relations or marketing cannot be maximized. Public relations and advertising/marketing have different intermediate goals. IMC evaluation is to integrate the

effects of both goal achievements to enhance the company's bottom-line. Previous IMC evaluation was trying to show the effects of all communication activities in view of the marketing goal. That could be marketing, but cannot be called IMC.

Focus on what to measure. Two new measures in IMC evaluation indicate the effects of cumulative and multidimensional message effects of controllable and uncontrollable communications (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lautenborn, 1993). IMC evaluation also tries to measure actual purchase behavior (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lautenborn, 1993). However, what's important in IMC evaluation is how to integrate effects, rather than what to measure. Previous research has shown what to measure such as awareness, attitude, preference, knowledge, commitments, brand relationship, network category, and behavior (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lautenborn, 1993). But it did not indicate how to integrate effects of public relations and advertising/marketing. As previously showed, public relations and advertising have different goals, their effects should be integrated in the evaluation level.

Marketing dominance. In fact, previous discussions about IMC are oriented to the inclusion of public relations function to the existing marketing communications (Tortorici, 1991; Niederquell, 1991; Strenski, 1991). This approach is identical to the marketing dominance model of Kotler and Mindak's (1978). However, this approach blocked the real integration of public relations values and confined the value of public relations to the product publicity or media relations (Ehling, White, and Gruning, 1992). This misunderstanding evoked harsh criticisms from public relations scholars in opposition to IMC (Ehling, White, and Grunig, 1992). Public relations itself contributes to the organization by maximizing a primary corporate asset such as the company's reputation

and relationships with publics (Gonring, 1994). Thus, evaluating the value of public relations depends on the contribution of public relations objectives to the organization's bottom-line, rather than their contribution to the advertising/marketing function. Each unique function of communication activities should be kept and consistently coordinated to maximize the synergy effects, rather than horizontal or vertical dominance of one marketing communication function.

Marketing communication. Compared to IMC, "marketing communication" is a familiar word to marketing practitioners. Nickels (1976) defined, "Marketing communications are two-way exchanges of information and persuasion which enable the marketing process to function more effectively and efficiently (p. 5)." Previous marketing literature used marketing communication in a broad meaning. The differentiation between marketing and communication was vague. Also, promotion was sometimes used as a meaning of marketing communication (Nickels, 1976). Nevertheless, marketing communication and IMC are basically different. Marketing communication assumes marketing as "a catcher" who orchestrates and sends signal to all marketing communication activities (Eisenhart, 1989). Following Kotler and Mindak's model (1978), marketing communication resembles marketing-dominant model. However, IMC integrates all marketing activities in an equal base to maximize the synergy effect. The most important characteristic of IMC is the emphasis on an independent role for integrated effects. Public relations does not function only as product publicity or media relations as in marketing communication. In IMC, company assets and product assets are managed at the same time. There is no dominance by one marketing communication area.

Visible and invisible assets. The effects of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) on the evaluation of sales person's performance was investigated to establish the model between OCBs and the evaluation of performance (Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994). However, the effects of OCBs at the organizational level have not been investigated because the company's invisible assets including the company's reputation and relationship with publics were not the main topic in marketing research. In fact, OCBs can be enlarged into the overall idea of public relations. However, current IMC evaluation has not integrated the effects from invisible assets such as OCBs, reputation, and relationships with publics. IMC on the strategy level could not be connected to IMC evaluation. An IMC textbook has just recently focused on the consumer's behavior or the impact on the behavior of the intended audience (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993).

Integration of Effects

Previous IMC evaluation has been applied only into the process of persuasion and focused more on behavior change as the consequence of IMC activities (Shultz, Tannenbaum, Lauterborn, 1993). However, it was insufficient to showcase the process of integration between effects of public relations and advertising.

There are three principles in IMC for getting the synergy effect: consistency, interactivity, and mission (Moriarty, 1994). In fact, public relations and advertising cannot be separated to be consistent and interactive, and to achieve a mission.

A nationwide survey showed that a company's reputation and social responsibility significantly influences the consumers' decision-making process (Gildea, 1994-95). It also

shows the significant relationship between a company's reputation and employee satisfaction, reputation and investment decision, and most importantly reputation and consumer's buying decision. From the outcomes of this survey, the company's reputation is an influential asset for corporate and brand equity together (Gildea, 1994-95). Company reputation has positive relationships with brand equity and the company's returns (Gildea, 1994-1995).

The author's previous research partly tested some relationships related to this paper (Kim, 1997; Kim, 1998). From the regression analysis of 92 companies for manufacturing consumer goods, the non-linear models for the relationship between reputation and the company's revenue showed the positive effects (Kim, 1997). The model, which includes advertising expenditure, brand equity, and the company's returns, proposes the positive relationship among advertising expense, brand equity, and the company's revenue (Kim, 1998). This study used 78 pooled observations from 26 companies.

Based on previous discussions, following testable propositions are established in the context of IMC.

P3) Reputation has a positive relationship to the company's returns.

P4) Brand equity has a positive relationship to the company's returns.

P5) Reputation and brand equity have simultaneous effects between them.

Model Specification

To make IMC effective and efficient, clarifying the relationship between brand assets and corporate assets is the most imminent task. Even though IMC is the integrated effort of communication activities, each communication activity has its own intermediate goal.

Integrating these intermediate goals into the ultimate goals such as profitability or revenue is the essence of IMC evaluation. The IMC evaluation model is specified to test all those hypotheses. Public relations activities are measured as a unobservable variable. Considering different budget allocations and the inconsistent categorization of public relations activities, the level of public relations should be measured by reasonable indicators. Community involvement, contribution to non-profit activities, environmental responsibility and social responsibility are indicators for public relations activities and reputation. Thus, the proposed model consists of the measurement model in psychometrics and the structural model in econometrics. For the measurement model part, confirmatory factor analysis is utilized to infer the factor from indicators. The following is the proposed model for IMC evaluation² (See Figure 3).

² This model will be tested by the structural equation model analysis. Secondary data will be used in the analysis except public relations expense data. Public relations expense data will be collected through the survey with corporate communication executives. The model could be revised throughout the estimation and model fitting process with strict theoretical justifications.

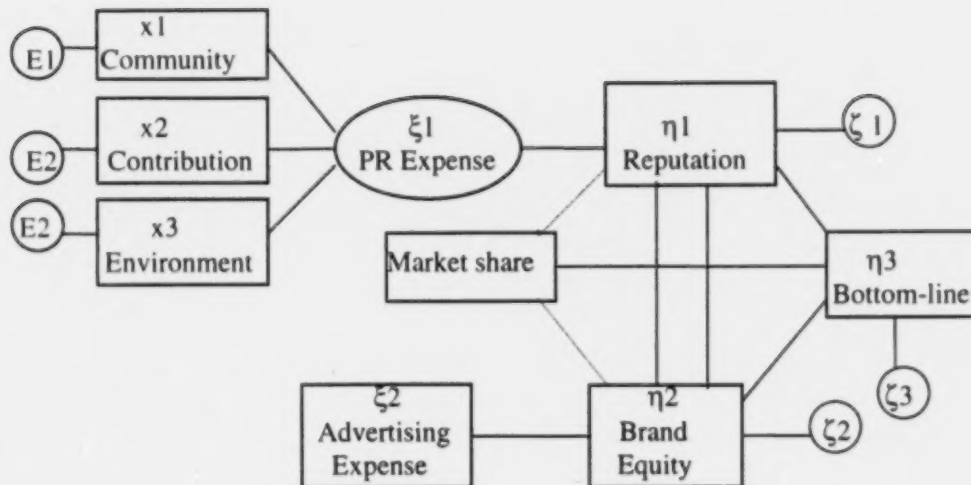


Figure 3. The proposed model for IMC evaluation

Note. 1. ----- : testable relationships.

2. x1 (expense for community involvement), x2 (contribution for nonprofit organization), and x3 (expense for environmental and social responsibility) are observed variables for measuring a latent variable of public relations. Due to different budget allocations and inconsistent categorization of public relations activities, using the latent variable for measuring public relation expense is suggested.

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***Public Relations and the Web: Measuring the Effect of
Interactivity, Information, and Access to Information in Web
Sites***

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Abstract

This study's purpose is to develop research that examines targeted publics' attitudes and behaviors concerning interactivity, information, and access to information in Web sites.

Using TORA, this study examined whether interactivity, information, access to information or any combination thereof, would be the best predictor of intention. Results showed that a combination of information and interactivity would be the best predictor of intending to revisit a Web site.

In the Internet age, public relations is a completely new ball game complete with new rules and tools. Even the demographics and geographics have changed. No wonder why many public relation agencies are behind marketing and advertising agencies in their use of the Web (Rapaport, 1997).

In considering the relationship between public relations and the Web, Gustafson (1996) inferred that public relations personnel faced with changes that will provide both new challenges and opportunities. However, just like all other new media, this mass medium provides both as many opportunities for success as for failure. Only this time markers for success are not as easy to read and the price for failing is forfeiting 40 million users (Ross, 1995).

The rest of this paper will discuss interactivity and the Web in public relations setting. Next will be the purpose and goals of this study. Following this part, the discussion of the Web and the consumer will ensue. The next section will provide a theoretical model intertwined with the theory of reasoned action. In the following order, the next segments will be the methodology, results, limitations, and discussion.

Web as an Interactive Medium

One of the things that makes the Web unique is its status as an "interactive" medium. Although the benefits of Web-based interactivity have been well publicized, very little work has been conducted to explore how the interactive nature of a company's Web site actually influences consumers' attitudes and opinions. Even researchers disagree about the definition and effects of interactivity. For example, in a 1995 article, Major provided short narratives of how the more "technologically astute" companies

practiced electronic public relations, and concluding that the overriding characteristic for success was "interactivity."

Harvey (1997), expands an evaluation model to include interactive media, defines interactivity in a process-oriented way, focusing on "clickthrough" and "page views" downloaded from the advertiser. Neuman (1991) defined interactivity as the "quality of electronically mediated communication characterized by increased control over the communication process by both sender and the receiver; either can be a microprocessor" (p.104). Anderson (1995) described five dimensions of interactivity, which all dealt with the quality, structure and relationship of information *as perceived by* the user.

Following along these lines, then, how is interactivity perceived within the context of Web sites by target publics? Do these targeted publics perceive interactive sites as being useful? Finally, do interactive Web sites have the potential to influence important consumer behavior variables such as attitude towards a corporation? If a site is perceived as interactive, then will these targeted publics come to the site when the corporation is in trouble?

In evaluating Web sites for public relations, there has been little empirical research. In fact, even within the Web advertising arena, the few recent studies that have been conducted have only included Web banners. This research seems to indicate that Web banners, in general, can be effective and may have some potential to influence brand attitudes and purchase intentions. A June 1997, survey of 3,600 American Online users found that about 40 percent of the test group could recall seeing 3 different banner ads for consumer brands, and that exposure increased intent to purchase (Wang, 1997). The Internet Advertising Bureau released the results of a study conducted by Millward Brown

Interactive that also indicated that exposure to banner ads on the Web increased recall and intent to purchase after exposure (Briggs and Hollis, 1997). As an explanation for why few studies have been done on the effectiveness of Web media use, Hoffman and Novak (1997) argue that banners are seen as being easier to study and categorize, since they represent the closest parallel on the Web to traditional media forms, but that other forms of Web communication may be just as effective. If banners can be effective, with their limited capabilities, lack of size, and inherent difficulties in taking advantage of the Web's interactive features, then what can full-blown Web sites achieve, which is what the public relations sites are?

Purpose and Goals

This study is designed to be an initial step in constructing an interactive and an information model of public relations on the Web based on current attitude research. The purpose is to begin to develop a stream of research that seeks to examine targeted publics (student consumers in this case) attitudes and behavior concerning the level of interactivity and its relationship to the level of information in Web sites. This study's goal is to initiate this process by specifically attempting to measure the effect of exposure to Web-based interactive message stimuli on respondents' willingness to revisit the site.

When it comes to conducting public relations activities, companies in high-tech fields are expected to be on the forefront and they cannot be seen as lagging behind (Major, 1995). These corporations value the role the Web plays in enhancing brand image and conveying a sense of "innovativeness" (Reynolds and Gutman, 1984).

Dobni & Zinkham (1990) recognized the traditional conceptualization of brand image as providing an orientation that is amenable to measurement and evaluation, but

often limited to a set of product characteristics. In contrast, the Web's delivery mechanism itself may influence perceptions, since it is a new and technologically sophisticated medium. Further, interactive message attributes unique to the medium may also effect brand image, thus effecting corporate image and attitude.

In traditional media, King (1989) suggested that the use of a "well - chosen visual metaphor" might provide a symbolic association that conveys desirable values that become associated with a brand in the consumer's mind. Along these lines, elements particular to corporation building through the Web, such as amount and usefulness of "hot links" to other related sites, download ability and ease of use of the interface --- access to information --- might have some effect on brand attitude in terms of their ability to convey desirable attributes and/or add value for the consumer.

The Web and the Public

In a study of brand communication styles on the Internet vs. established media, Philport and Arbittier concluded that each medium effects its content. The print medium's superiority in displaying text and relatively unlimited message duration makes it a good information carrier, while broadcast's fixed exposure duration, contrasted with immediacy and intensity of exposure, make it effective at conveying messages geared toward emotional and psychological appeals (Philport & Arbittier, 1997). Each medium's characteristics add meaning and shape to the content they deliver. The associations conveyed by the medium and its message elements, when used effectively, convey desirable value to consumers.

In an early Web study, Hawkins (1994) identified a number of unique elements that create associations and add value for Web sites to consumers. These elements

included *superior access to information*; *increased relevance of information* via user driven exposure (users make the choice to be exposed via clicking on a banner or URL); *flexibility in and ease of* updating ads in response to changing market conditions and consumer needs; and *direct transaction capability* to make purchases online. He cited limited production quality and lack of familiarity with the Web as value detractors, a finding that corresponds to Brighish's 1993 study that showed that users felt Web sites should be "highly visual, easy and fun to use."

Ducoffe, applying a previous study that assessed advertising value in traditional media (1995) to the Web (1996), found that the Web potentially offers consumers a number of benefits that may enhance the value of the corporation. Ducoffe concluded that consumers could discern differences in both message character and value in Web sites. In his view, one way to optimize this value is through the Web's interactive capabilities, which afford the *consumer* access to timely and convenient information presented in a relevant (organized, navigable, searchable) and entertaining (engrossing, fun) manner.

One item to note, in all the above definitions of information, access to information, and interactivity, it is the *perceived* amount of information, access to information, and interactivity by the user. Therefore it stands to reason that:

(H1) The higher the amount of information, amount of interactivity, and access to information (through hot links, quickness of loading, and ease of use) within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

(H1a) The higher the amount of information and the interactivity within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

(H1b) The higher the amount of access to information and interactivity within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site, and

(H1c) The higher the amount of access to information and information within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

These hypotheses would be a first step in enhancing the corporate value through the Web. The differences in the variables should also start to delineate what types of interactions exist between the variables and how to tap into them. Most important, the testing of these hypotheses should be a starting point to enable public relations practitioners focus on what combinations of variables are important to entice the consumer back to revisiting a Web site.

Theory of Reasoned Action as a Theoretical Framework

Briggs & Hollis (1997) have suggested that because most advertising does not evoke an immediate behavioral response, studies designed to measure the effectiveness of Web advertising, in particular, should measure both the attitudinal and behavioral responses to exposure. Their 1997 study argued that the more exposures and more time allotted to that exposure will result in better brand recognition and brand loyalty.

Following along these lines, the present study includes measures based on assessing attitudes toward revisiting the Web site. This approach is in keeping with a

model that has been well accepted as a framework for the study of consumer behavior - Theory of Reasoned Action (TORA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

The TORA has been employed in a wide variety of social psychological studies that deal with attempting to predict changes in attitude and behavior. The basic proposition of this model is that in order to predict a behavior (such as a online purchase), one must try to measure a consumer's intention to behave, (such as an intent to revisit the Web site) itself a function of attitude towards the behavior (attitude toward revisiting the Web site) and subjective norms (what important referents believe) for that specific target behavior (See Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The present study adapted TORA to include interactivity, information, and access to information as variables to Web site attitude (See Figure 1).

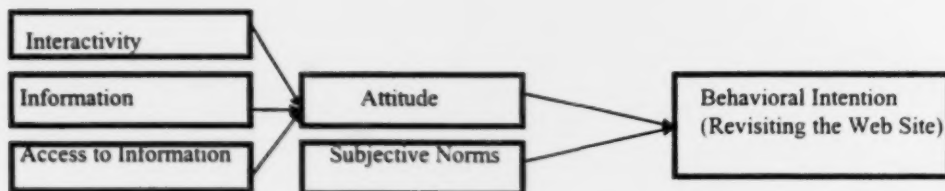


Figure 1.

Interactivity, Information, and Access to Information combined with TORA

Given this model, the following hypotheses additional were developed.

- (H2) Interactivity will have a stronger relationship to attitude than information and access to information, and

(H3) Attitude will have a stronger relationship to behavioral intention than subjective norms.

Methodology

This study was conducted to assess the importance interactivity and information in predicting attitudes and behavioral intentions toward revisiting the brands or corporation's Web site.

Experimental Design

Approximately 100 college student subjects were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions using existing full Web sites as the exposure stimulus. This study focused on a comparison of competitive brands in two demographically targeted product categories, beer and watches, which were chosen because they have been used in similar studies (Lassar, Mittal and Sharma, 1995). These sites were chosen because they featured corporate information.

The experiment took place in a reserved university computer lab. The selected Web sites were bookmarked on all the computers used in the experiment. After a brief introduction and tutorial, the participants were randomly assigned a questionnaire booklet that had the experimental condition on its cover. The participants were requested to go to the bookmark and pull-up the site referred to in the questionnaire booklet. They were then allowed to examine the message stimulus for 10 minutes. Once this time was completed, subjects were instructed to open the booklet and answer the questions.

Questionnaire variables

All the variables were measured on a nine-point Likert-type scales (1 is the low or negative endpoint and 9 is the high or positive endpoint). The variables of information, interactivity, and ease of use were adapted from Intelliquest (1997); the other factors were adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen's TORA model (1975).

Information was a four-item scale measured with the following item anchors:
This Web site: was extremely useful, had up-to-date information, information was tailored to my needs, and was thought provoking.

Interactivity was a ten-item scale. The following were the items for this scale:
This web site was: not highly interactive-highly interactive, not imaginative-imaginative, dull-not dull, irritating-not irritating, not entertaining-entertaining, not sales orientated-sales oriented, not innovative-innovative, not visually-visually appealing, and pointless-not pointless.

Access to information was a three-item scale. The following items were measured on a nine-point Likert-type scale: The Web site did (not contain-contained) a useful set of hot links, The Web site was (was not) easy to use, and The Web site (did not) loaded quickly.

Attitude was measured on a four-item scale, with the following: What is your attitude toward the _____ brand? The end-points were good bad, negative, positive, favorable-unfavorable, and pleasant-unpleasant.

Subjective Norms was a three-item, nine-point scale. The items were my family, my friends, and my neighbors would-would not expect me to try it.

Behavioral Intention was a three-item scale. These items were: overall liking of the Web site, likelihood to visit the site again, and interest in purchasing products. These items, like all the above items, were measured nine-point, Likert-type scale, whose endpoints were 1=low, and 9=high.

Results

Participants (N=98) in this study were students in an introductory public relation's course at a large southeastern university, with 52 percent were female and 48% were male; 84.7 percent reported either being a junior or a senior.

A confirmatory-factor analysis conducted with all the scales in the questionnaire, all scales revealed a one-factor solution. The Chronbach's reliability alpha's for this study's scales are as follows: information $\alpha = .75$, interactivity $\alpha = .87$ access to information $\alpha = .57$, attitude $\alpha = .97$, subjective norms $\alpha = .92$, and behavioral intentions $\alpha = .75$.

The means and standard deviations were run on all the variables and are reported in the table below (See Table 1.).

Table I

Means, Standard Deviations and Numbers for Interactivity, Information, Access to Information, Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Interactivity	6.04	1.52
Information	5.26	1.75
Access to Information	6.30	1.75
Attitude	5.97	1.86
Subjective Norms	2.65	2.08
Behavioral Intentions	3.97	2.27

n=98

Interactivity and information scales were divided into groups of low and high interactivity, information and access to information, using a mean score as the criterion for dichotomization. Because interactivity, information, and access to information are perceived, it is possible that people would attribute these variables from the known brand, not from the Web site, therefore, the variable brand was held constant in all the following tests. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

(H1) The higher the amount of information, amount of interactivity, and access to information (through hot links, quickness of loading, and ease of use) within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

This was tested by a 2x2x2 General Linear Model analysis with brand as a covariate. The test suggested that this hypothesis was not supported $F(8, 1.89) p=1.68$, $\eta^2=.131$.

(H1a) The higher amounts of information and the interactivity within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

This hypothesis was tested with an ANCOVA with brand as a covariate. This test suggested that the hypothesis was supported ($F(4, 3.314)$, $p=.014$, $\eta^2=.125$). The means are reported as follows: for low information/low interactivity 5.35, for low information/high interactivity 5.63; for high information/low interactivity 5.25; and for high information/high interactivity 6.50. For a visual representation, see Figure 2.

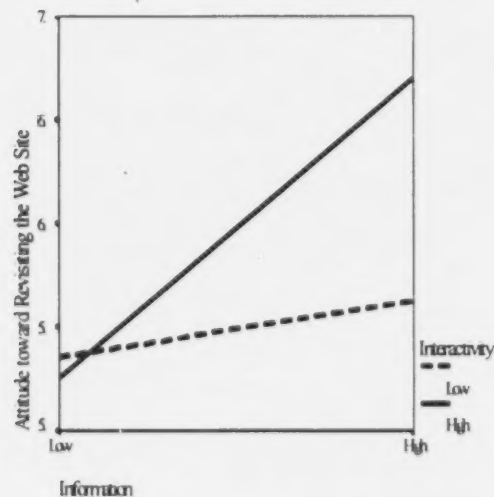


Figure 2.

Attitudes toward Revisiting a Web Site with High and Low Information and High and Low Interactivity.

(H1b) The higher the amount of access to information and interactivity within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

This hypothesis was tested with an ANCOVA with brand as a covariate. This test suggested that the hypothesis was not supported $F(4, 2.20)$, $p = .073$, $\eta^2 = .087$. The means are reported below in Table II.

Table II.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Number for Attitudes with High and Low Access to Information and High and Low Interactivity.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Low Access to Information/Low Interactivity	5.35	1.93	29
Low Access to Information/High Interactivity	5.56	1.22	19
High Access to Information/Low Interactivity	6.28	2.04	9
High Access to Information/High Interactivity	6.54	1.87	41

(H1c) The higher amounts of access to information and information within a Web site should have a positive effect on the attitude of revisiting the Web site.

This hypothesis was tested with an ANCOVA with brand as a covariate. This test suggested that the hypothesis was supported $F(4, 2.14)$ $p = .050$, $\eta^2 = .094$. The means are reported below in Table III.

Table III.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Number of Respondents for Attitudes

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Low Access to Information/Low Interactivity	5.31	1.97	25
Low Access to Information/High Interactivity	5.37	1.14	16
High Access to Information/Low Interactivity	6.06	1.96	13
High Access to Information/High Interactivity	6.55	1.83	44

(H2) Interactivity will have a stronger relationship to attitude than information and access to information.

To test this hypothesis, a Pearson's correlation was conducted. Interactivity with attitude, showed $r = .404$, $p = .000$, information with attitude $r = .285$, $p = .004$, and access to information $r = .222$, $p = .028$. A regression analysis was also conducted; this test showed that for interactivity $\beta = .401$, $p = .005$, information $\beta = .065$, $p = .568$, and access to information $\beta = -.059$, $p = .630$ $R^2 = .168$. Thus, this hypothesis was supported.

Prediction of Behavioral Intentions

For H3: Attitude will have a stronger relationship to behavioral intention than subjective norms, a pathway analysis using regression on SPSS was conducted on the variables of attitude and subjective norms to behavioral intentions. In this case, behavioral intention was the target behavior of revisiting the Web site (See Table V). Therefore, this hypothesis was supported.

Table V**Prediction of Behavioral Intentions from Attitude and Subjective Norms**

Measures	β	r partial	R^2
Attitude	.544**	.569**	
Subjective Norms	.105	.375**	.364

** $p < .01$

A survey of these results would indicate result section is that interactivity combined with information seems to evoke the most positive attitudes toward revisiting a Web site. Interactivity seems to be the strongest indicator of attitudes when compared to information and access to information. In addition, attitudes seem to be the strongest predictor of revisiting a Web site (behavioral intention).

Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to be an initial step in constructing an interactive and an information model of public relations on the Web based on current attitude research. To that end, the current study examined the consumer perception of interactivity to a limited extent. The development of a subscale that could be analyzed according to their degree of perception by respondents would help to flesh out the model. This would begin to identify important interactivity components and their effect on attitude.

No questions were asked about attitude toward the medium itself, and/or technology, a direction that might provide useful in pulling apart the constructs of interactivity and innovativeness. This research did not try to distinguish between interactivity and innovativeness. This may be an important next step in continuing this research.

Discussion

One of the goals of this study was to extend current research efforts beyond banner advertising to include public relations within full-blown Web sites. Within this attempt, this study focused on examining how viewers perceive interactivity in Web sites. Findings in this study seem to support the argument that publics perceive interactivity differently, and that perception will have a positive effect on whether they will revisit the site.

This gives credence to the idea that the concept of interactivity is important from a public relations perspective. If the corporation can elicit return visitors through the "hook" of interactivity, then the corporation can build positive attitudes with these visitors. One way would be to internally controlling what information the site has about the company and its products. Having targeted publics and latent publics know about the company may also have an "inoculation effect." If these groups have already visited the site and trust what information is presented, then when mishaps occur, the public relations official already has a credible and directly controllable medium in which to disseminate information. However, as this research also seemed to indicate, the downside is that interactivity for its sake is not good enough. For the communication to be successful, the site needs to match level of interactivity with a corresponding level of information that the customer perceives as important.

From a research perspective, the findings of H1a) the interaction effect between interactivity and information with respect to attitudes, are worth further exploration. Corporations who previously assumed that any degree of interactivity in their Web site would be enough should probably think about whether or not their message is being as

high in interactivity by the target audience without the support of useful information. The data seem to suggest that if you have a Web site that is low in information in order to have consumers have the most positive attitudes toward the site, then you need to "match" the interactivity with low information. This suggests that corporations cannot just add interactivity to the Web site in order to create more positive attitudes toward their company. Given the current study's results, the question becomes: Is it best to go with the "state of the art" technology and create the image of innovativeness, or should you be a "step" down from the "state of the art" and have something that most users can easily recognize?

Another interesting finding that this study supported was that access to information, as it was defined, had little bearing on attitude. A couple of reasons may exist, and these need to be further explored. One reason may be the fact that it is only a three-item scale versus the ten-item interactivity scale, thus interactivity overpowered or incorporated in the participants' minds that interactivity and access to information were the same thing. A very plausible reason is that even though these scales of interactivity and access to information factor loaded on different measures, they may have more in common than meets the eye. A post hoc Pearson's correlation was conducted to ascertain this relationship and indeed, the correlation between access to information and interactivity was high. $r = .633$, $p = .000$. This indicates that both of these scales need to be strengthened.

This particular study started with the idea that if you can build a highly interactive and informative Web site, then you can capitalize on building brand and corporate image through longer and more intense exposures than any other type of campaign. This

question of to what extent can interactivity helps builds brand image is still one that needs to be explored.

From a theoretical perspective H2 and H3 suggest that there is a relationship between interactivity and information and attitude. This is an important finding. This study had brands that were in the same product category. The brands were held for constant for the analysis. This makes these results applicable through a range of product categories and Web sites.

In addition, the strength of the correlation's and the beta's, suggest that this notion of interactivity is more important than information, even though the Web is known as the information superhighway. These results support the idea that not only does a brand or a corporation need to invest in a Web site, the money also needs to be there to have it be interactive in order to have value for the targeted publics.

The ability to understand the value of interactivity for targeted publics and determines how interactive messages influence consumer attitude is important from three perspectives. First, it adds to the body of research currently being done that attempts to evaluate and compare online media use and effectiveness against traditional forms of mass media; and second, it provides a way to extend existing models of public relations to include interactivity along with information in evaluating the Web as a viable medium for disseminating important information and keeping the tide public opinion positive.

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND LEGAL FUNCTIONS

INTRODUCTION

There is growing concern among U.S. Air Force communicators and lawyers regarding the relationship between the two disciplines, especially during crisis situations. The Air Force's former Director of Public Affairs has described the alliance between the two as "a complex relationship between two member of the same team,"¹ and another senior Air Force public affairs officer admits that "whether at Air Force headquarters or in the field, we often experience a conflict of perspectives when lawyers and public affairs officers advise senior leaders during crises."² Recognizing this, the researcher examined the relationship between Air Force legal and public affairs functions by gathering data to determine what conflict exists, how often it occurs, how it is usually resolved, its overall effects on the Air Force, and how the relationship between the two functions can be improved.

Examining this relationship is important because there is evidence to suggest that the actual number of crises faced by organizations is rising. A study conducted by the Institute for Crisis Management showed that the first six months of 1996 saw a 13% increase in the number of business crises.³ Although white-collar crime, corporate mismanagement and labor disputes made up nearly half of the crises studied by the Institute, sexual harassment was the fastest growing crisis category - jumping 192% during the same time period.

One researcher attributes the jump in the number of crises to increased interest from the mass media and to an increase in the number of lawsuits filed against companies - factors which are naturally of great concern to both lawyers and communicators.⁴ And in today's environment, says one crisis communication scholar, "So many crises are created by lawsuits there is a growing need for lawyers and PR folks to work together."⁵

Another reason why the relationship between lawyers and public relations practitioners is so important during a crisis is the time factor. Executives are under tremendous pressure at the onset of a crisis and what little time there is "shouldn't be wasted in bickering between lawyers and public relations people."⁶ From an Air Force perspective, crises can impact commanders' options, service members' reputations, and most importantly, Air Force policy formulation.⁷ A senior Air Force lawyer who regularly briefs officers regarding the military justice system perceives that commanders are distressed to see distortions in the media and their "possible impact on their ability to handle a case according to their best judgment."⁸

There is already a body of knowledge on the relationship between corporate lawyers and public relations people. The research shows the two sides frequently can offer "competing and adversarial approaches to problem solving" and "have a paralyzing effect on the decision-making process," -- forcing leaders to balance the two perspectives.⁹ This could be because, as one senior Air Force lawyer said, the legal focus normally has been on inside-the-courtroom issues and "media relations has been traditionally left to Public Affairs."¹⁰ But on the other hand, many scholars and practitioners believe that if properly used, the two consultants can play significant roles in helping an organization survive or even prevent a crisis.¹¹

Research on this topic has been done mostly by communicators using data gathered from other communicators. However, the researcher gathered data from not only public affairs personnel, but also from legal practitioners and from Air Force decision makers -- the commanders. Because researchers have neglected examining this relationship from the perspective of these other professionals, this research will fill a void in the literature on the subject.

Additionally, nearly all of the research regarding this relationship has been done from the corporate or business viewpoint -- which has left a gap in research regarding those in government and, in particular, military service. Still, a few similarities can be drawn between the two types of organizations. With more than 500,000 employees, an annual \$75 billion budget and more than 75 worldwide installations, the United States Air Force is comparable to a large international company.¹² And like any large company, the Air Force is faced with crises from time to time and will continue to be vulnerable to crises and related negative effects. The Air Force is also similar to civilian companies which, when facing crises, are "turning to two consultants: lawyers and those engaged in public relations."¹³

Nevertheless, the military faces three additional factors that might exacerbate any existing strain between the two fields. First, the Department of Defense consistently draws a very large amount of attention from Congress, the news media, special interest groups, the states and communities where installations are based, and the millions who have family members and friends who serve. One Air Force lawyer who has noticed the increased media coverage of Air Force courts martial and other disciplinary actions attributes it to an increase in the number of "victims" seeking media attention on their behalf, the growing use of the media by defense attorneys and the proliferation of and competition among the media themselves.¹⁴ And recently, the media have been more rigorous in getting

information, often from other-than-official sources, says another Air Force lawyer – making it even more essential that communicators and lawyers work closely together to minimize distortions in the media.¹⁵

Second, in addition to being under the jurisdiction of state and federal law, all military members have other legal responsibilities under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and military regulations – which can create challenges that corporate practitioners may never face. For example, although company executives may lose their jobs or face civil litigation from spouses following adulterous affairs with coworkers, recent high-visibility cases have shown that service members can be criminally prosecuted and put in jail for similar transgressions. Although “adultery is almost never prosecuted unless other serious offense are also alleged,”¹⁶ the Air Force has prosecuted nine people for adultery alone since 1985.¹⁷

Third, military spokespersons are obligated by law to release information unless it is classified or otherwise exempt under the Freedom of Information Act. So although choosing not to release information may be a viable option for corporate public relations practitioners, government communicators operate under a different set of rules.

The combination of these three factors -- intense media attention, the UCMJ, and the obligation to release information -- can make for some unique legal-public relations situations. Research into the relationship between these two fields in the military will add to the body of knowledge that already exists regarding the relationship in corporate and business service.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Terms

There has been much discussion in the literature regarding the definition of “conflict,” but for purposes of this paper, a conflict exists “whenever incompatible activities occur.”¹⁸ Two military terms also need clarification. The military calls its public relations function *public affairs*. Although there are a few differences between what a corporate public relations person does and what an Air Force public affairs person does, the functions of media relations, community relations and internal relations are largely the same, so the two terms will be used interchangeably. Similarly, the Air Force calls its legal officers *judge advocates*, which will be used interchangeably with “lawyers” and “attorneys.”

Conflict Theory – An Overview

Conflict and the Causes of Conflict

Morton Deutsch, a sociologist who has studied conflict for more than 25 years, has written, "Conflict can neither be eliminated nor even suppressed for long."¹⁹ His statement that conflict occurs "whenever incompatible activities occur" is not limited to only competitive situations but also extends to cooperative situations as well since "controversy over the means to achieve a mutually desired objective is a common part of cooperation."²⁰ He believes that conflict in and of itself is neither good nor bad, but that conflicts can be resolved with either constructive or destructive consequences to the participants: "A conflict clearly has destructive consequences if its participants are dissatisfied with the outcomes and feel they have lost as a result of the conflict ... a conflict has productive consequences if the participants all are satisfied with their outcomes and feel that they have gained as a result of the conflict."²¹

Conflict Resolution

If, as Deutsch says, conflict between parties is inevitable from time to time, the goal of conflict resolution is not necessarily how to eliminate or prevent conflict but rather "how to make it productive."²² Conflict can be resolved in a variety of ways. One of the simplest ways to analyze conflict resolution is detailed by Alan Filley. He lists three methods: forcing (win-lose), compromising (lose-lose), and problem solving (win-win).²³

As the labels in parentheses suggest, win-lose and lose-lose methods mean that at least one party of the conflict has failed to achieve objectives, thereby causing what Deutsch would call destructive consequences. Forcing methods are characterized by "real or perceived power imbalances between the parties" where each tries to control such things as information, money and authority -- resulting in one party giving in to the other or a deadlock.²⁴ Compromising methods differ from forcing in the assumption by both parties that there is an equal balance of power between them and that continued disagreement is more costly than compromise. Even so, each party still tries to increase its power, and information is still hoarded or manipulated to gain an advantage. The result of compromising methods is that, while both parties agree to a particular decision, neither is really satisfied with it.²⁵

On the other hand, problem-solving methods use consensus strategies and focus on the end goal, thereby causing what Deutsch would call productive consequences. As a win-win method, the only thing lost by engaging in

problem-solving, says Filley, is "the creation of losers."²⁶ Problem-solving is characterized by a belief that it is possible to "arrive at a solution which is of high quality and which is mutually acceptable."²⁷ Information is fully shared and all alternatives are evaluated before a decision is made, and the outcome of this win-win method is usually a decision to which both parties are committed. Unfortunately, says Filley, forcing and compromising are the most practiced methods of conflict resolution, perhaps "because of the tendency many of us have to persist in using learned behavior patterns, even those which are destructive."²⁸ The decision by a party to use a particular method is based on each party's belief of the possibility of an agreement, the possibility of finding a win-win solution, and the ultimate consequences.²⁹

Public Relations vs. Legal Counsel

Using conflict theory to examine the relationship between public relations and legal counsel is appropriate, because although both staff functions are usually on the same team, whether that team is the Air Force or a company, each represents different and sometimes conflicting objectives. Such conflicts can reflect the two arenas in which they operate -- "courts of law proclaim that a person is innocent until proven guilty, whereas the court of public opinion often declares a person guilty until proven innocent."³⁰ A negative ruling in either can be devastating -- in a court of law, one can be imprisoned or lose large sums of money, and in the court of public opinion, "you lose your reputation, your good name and your positive image."³¹ Conflicts between the two also may be a result of perceived or real incompatibilities with the laws or rules which govern each field. For example, although military personnel are bound by the Freedom of Information Act and other regulatory instructions to provide full disclosure of information to the public with minimum delay,³² they also are restricted by law from releasing some types of personal information about Air Force employees under The Privacy Act of 1974 and other regulations. And, the Air Force's Rules of Professional conduct, which are based on the American Bar Association's Standards for Criminal Justice, prohibit personnel from making statements that "have a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing an adjudicative proceeding."³³ At the core of such conflict is one experienced by military and civilian lawyers and communicators alike -- the balance between the public's right to know and an organization's or a person's right to privacy and the right to fair legal proceedings.

Lawyers and the Court of Law

There is disagreement over whether there has been a "litigation explosion" in the United States. One author estimates that civil litigation "is increasing approximately seven times faster than the national population"³⁴ and another estimates that up to 30 million cases are filed each year.³⁵ Yet the national Center for State Courts reported in 1996 that there is no evidence that the number of civil lawsuits is on the rise and that the number has actually been decreasing since 1990.³⁶ Regardless of the actual number of cases filed, they cost corporate America more than \$80 billion a year.³⁷ Because corporate lawyers want to prevent litigation from occurring and desire to win should a lawsuit be filed against their company, they naturally want to control any information which could affect such litigation. Since anything spoken or written can potentially be used against a client in court, and since anyone with knowledge of an organization can be called into court for depositions against a client,³⁸ "the last thing that an attorney wants to do is to lose control of the words..."³⁹ And although some public relations practitioners argue that "wordsmithing is time-consuming and pointless,"⁴⁰ it is for this reason that some lawyers instinctively "encourage the CEO to head for the bunker and slam the door, saying and admitting nothing."⁴¹ One lawyer who is concerned about the balance between public relations and legal issues during crises states:

One of a lawyer's primary concerns in a crisis is ensuring that the client doesn't make statements that will prove detrimental or fatal in a later legal proceeding. Be assured that all public statements – written or oral – made by a company and its representative during a crisis will be scrutinized by lawyers preparing a later lawsuit against the company. Any statements even slightly suggestive of an admission of liability will turn up in post-crisis litigation.⁴²

Therefore, it is not surprising that some lawyers focus on winning the legal battle and believe that "if the case is won, it does not matter what the public thinks."⁴³ One author sums up a description of this *traditional legal communication strategy*: say nothing; say as little as possible and release it as quietly as possible; say as little possible, citing privacy law, company policy or sensitivity; deny guilt and/or act indignant that such charges could possibly have been made; and shift or, if necessary, share the blame with the plaintiff.⁴⁴

Public Relations and the Court of Public Opinion

In its crisis communication manual, General Motors says that "there are few assets on GM's balance sheet worth more than its reputation. A damaged reputation that is left untended can lead to a loss of organizational self-esteem and erosion of long-standing external relationships."⁴⁵ On a similar note, the Air Force's former top military officer, General Ronald Fogleman, said that "we must consider our corporate image as a priceless resource as

valuable as our people and aircraft."⁴⁶ During the past 10 years, the military has remained one of the institutions in which Americans have the most confidence, according to annual Harris Polls.⁴⁷ The 1997 poll netted the armed services the top spot with 37% of respondents indicating they had "a great deal of confidence" in the military, with the medical community and the U.S. Supreme Court garnering second and third place with 29% and 28% respectively. Even so, just a year earlier the same rating for the military was at 47% -- a full ten points higher. Some, including Harris officials, have attributed this loss of confidence to the string of recent military sex scandals and other embarrassing incidents.

One author agrees with the emphasis on reputation, saying, "The notion of damage to corporate reputation is not just ephemeral, but actually a tangible item...."⁴⁸ An example of just how tangible a reputation can be to a company's bottom line is the crisis at Texaco which occurred after *The New York Times* printed transcripts of a meeting where company executives made racially offensive comments and discussed withholding evidence from a current lawsuit claiming racial discrimination. The financial fallout from the damage to its reputation -- the value of its stock, the scrutiny of government regulators, the boycott and defection of customers, and more -- will "dwarf" the millions Texaco will pay to settle the lawsuit that initiated the crisis in the first place.⁴⁹

Gerald Meyers, a business professor at Carnegie Mellon University who teaches a crisis response curriculum, believes that public relations deserves equal footing with lawyers during crises. "If you win public opinion," he says, "the company can move forward and get through it. If you lose there, it won't make any difference what happens in a court of law."⁵⁰ Kathy Fitzpatrick, a public relations practitioner and lawyer, agrees saying, "Once a company's reputation is destroyed, it may not matter if any lawsuits are filed."⁵¹ She describes the *traditional public relations* way of responding to accusations and rebuilding credibility as a five step process: state company policy on the issue, investigate the allegations, be candid, voluntarily admit that a problem exists, if true, and announce/implement corrective measures as fast as possible.⁵²

Veteran public relations people know that those who "demonstrate the ability to communicate early, lead the public debate and establish themselves as a credible source have the best opportunity to win in the court of public opinion."⁵³ Certain public relations techniques also can help an organization win in a court of law. One litigation public relations counselor has developed a communication process for mitigating legal, media relations and political consequences following a damaging situation:

Admit a problem exists and state that something will be done to fix it; explain why the problem occurred and the known reasons for it; commit to regularly report additional information; declare the organization's specific steps to address the issues; state "regret, empathy, sympathy or even embarrassment" by taking responsibility, if appropriate, for having allowed the situation to occur; ask the government, the community, and opponents for help; publicly set or reset goals at zero - "zero errors, zero defects, zero dumb decisions, zero problems;" and find a way to make restitution quickly because situations remedied quickly cost a lot less and are controversial for much shorter periods of time.⁵⁴

Balancing Legal and Public Relations Communication Strategies

A strictly legal communication strategy can have a very negative effect on the public's perception of an organization in crisis. An overly cautious attorney can "thwart efforts at communicating a company's message by precluding all but the most banal public comments and eviscerating carefully crafted news releases."⁵⁵ And although it is true that what people say can be used against them in a court of law, "anything you do not say can be used against you in the court of public opinion."⁵⁶ This is especially important in crises which involve loss of life. One crisis communication expert writes: "Show concern for the families. Treat survivors compassionately. Provide them with as much information as possible. Keep them informed about the investigation of the incident ... Don't let possible legal liabilities interfere with presenting a human face."⁵⁷

From a media relations view, refusing to tell one's own side of the story can be suicidal to an organization. "Journalists abhor a void," says a senior vice president at Fleishman-Hillard, a leading public relations firm, "and will fill it with or without your cooperation."⁵⁸ What is worse is that the media will often find an organization's opponent to be more cooperative. As one author put it, "Never doubt the resourcefulness of your adversaries, nor the willingness of the public to believe the worst of the best companies."⁵⁹ An Air Force lawyer with a background in mass communication agrees, saying that the Air Force "can't afford NOT to play -- the 'other side' will whether or not we do."⁶⁰ And although the Air Force traditionally does not try cases in the media, another Air Force lawyer recognizes that "we can't routinely let incorrect statements stand in the media."⁶¹

Bolstering these opinions are data from two studies. A recent Opinion Research Corporation study showed that "58% of the public believe that a large company is guilty when its spokesperson responds with 'no comment' to charges of wrongdoing."⁶² A 1993 national survey to measure public perception of corporate crises pushed the number up to 65% who said that "when a company spokesperson declines to comment, it almost always means that the company is guilty of wrongdoing."⁶³ Such reaction from the American public is natural. As one author put it, "The public believes that an innocent man can answer a policeman's questions without having a lawyer present. After

all, what does he have to hide?"⁶⁴ It is for this reason that most public relations people advocate a strategy that says, "You may not be able to say much, but you can say something. If all the facts aren't there, get out and say so."⁶⁵ And some attorneys also believe that "'no comment' is the least appropriate and least productive response ... it adds absolutely nothing and leaves the public with a negative impression."⁶⁶ Similarly, although the Air Force will often decline to discuss certain types of information, it instructs spokespersons not to use "no comment" because "you will sound and look guilty."⁶⁷ Dow Corning is a company which failed to "get out and say so" and has lost millions in settling claims over its silicone breast implants and been criticized for not releasing factual information soon enough.⁶⁸

One example of a company which lost in the legal courts partly because it lost in the court of public opinion is Denny's. Even after more than 4,300 individual claims of racial discrimination in its restaurants, Denny's public statement said, "Our company does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Any time evidence of such behavior is brought to our attention, we investigate and appropriate disciplinary action is taken."⁶⁹ This denial, in the face of evidence or perception of the opposite, contributed to the \$43.7 million Denny's forked out to settle the class-action suit.⁷⁰ Another example of an organization that damaged its own image before the court battle began was Sears, which in 1992 faced accusations that its automotive centers were regularly overcharging customers. Sears immediately denied the charges. The company later softened its response, but the damage already was done. According to Meyers, "They apparently thought the lawyers would take care of it and that they'd be a success in a court of law, but in a situation like this that should be way down your list of priorities."⁷¹

In fairness, not all lawyers recommend the "no comment" approach. There are lawyers who "realize that a defendant can win a battle in a court of law and lose in the court of public opinion"⁷² and who "appreciate that there is no point in protecting a company legally if consumer confidence is so undermined that there is no company left to protect by the time a case comes to court."⁷³ Perhaps they know that, because the court of public opinion can be very influential in determining the success or failure of a company, it is possible to win the legal battle but lose the war. That very reason was behind the decision by the owners of a Florida restaurant who decided not to prosecute a teenager who had spread rumors about the establishment which resulted in a drastic cut in business. The teenager publicly apologized and company officials felt that if they did proceed with legal action, it would have been perceived in the community as "the powerful restaurant ruining the life of a well-meaning child who made a mistake in judgment."⁷⁴

Some lawyers, including famed defense attorney Robert Shapiro, believe that "there is no question that media coverage can and does affect the ultimate outcome of widely publicized cases" and that influencing the media can be just as consequential as convincing judges and juries.⁷⁵ Other attorneys agree, including one former U.S. Attorney who, in response to Kenneth Starr's communication tactics in investigating allegations that President Clinton lied under oath and obstructed justice, said "The public's perception of how a case is handled is very important. That's half the battle in high-profile cases."⁷⁶

As described in the section on conflict resolution, it is possible to end up with a lose-lose situation as well. This happened in 1997, when the Air Force went forward with court martial proceedings against the nation's first female bomber pilot for offenses which included lying, disobedience and adultery -- a case that "boomeranged against the military in the court of public opinion."⁷⁷ The pilot, First Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, hired a lawyer and public relations firm to plead her case with the news media and succeeded in "framing the case as one of a hide-bound military establishment willing to destroy her career and throw her in jail because, as she put it, 'I fell in love with the wrong man.'"⁷⁸ She succeeded, in part, due to the fact that her privacy rights combined with legal interpretations of statutory restrictions effectively muzzled the Air Force.⁷⁹ In fact, "despite warnings from senior people in public affairs that the service was going to get its clock cleaned in the court of public opinion, Air Force lawyers insisted that the service basically do nothing to tell its side of the story."⁸⁰ Still, military spokespersons did what they could to emphasize to the media and to the public that the crux of the court action was on the lying and disobedience charges, not the adultery charge. Still, the public initially took Flinn's side -- in a Gallup Poll taken during the controversy, 62% of those surveyed were sympathetic to the pilot.⁸¹ In response to mounting public and congressional pressure, the Air Force opted for a general discharge for Lt. Flinn instead of proceeding with the court martial -- sparing itself the "national embarrassment of court-martialing her amid a rising storm of public protest."⁸² Surprisingly, the tide began to turn against Flinn once more of the prosecutor's information was released to the public. Even so, a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll indicated that 53% of respondents felt the Air Force mishandled the situation.⁸³ In analyzing this crisis, one journalist summed up the case by saying, "If the Air Force made a mistake in Flinn's case, it was in not recognizing sooner when a public relations battle was so far lost that it was no longer worth fighting."⁸⁴ The end result was that the Air Force lost not only its control over the military justice system, but lost public image points as well.

There are many advantages to using a proactive public relations strategy during crises. Although not entirely without criticism, Johnson & Johnson's use of such techniques in response to the Tylenol cyanide crisis has long been extolled as a textbook response to a crisis. The company made efforts to answer all media inquiries, halted all Tylenol advertising and posted a \$100,000 reward for information leading to an arrest. The result was that the brand name went on to quickly regain its 37% share of the pain-reliever market.⁸⁵ But perhaps most importantly, from a crisis communication point of view, the CEO voluntarily associated himself with the negative story. And ever since, says one author, "the media have come to expect the senior managers to deal with reports, to be accessible and to supply all the answers."⁸⁶

Certainly a proactive public relations strategy can be effective in countering what is automatically a stacked deck against organizations involved in crises, and as a result it has been the battle cry for years by seasoned public relations practitioners. The reality is that organizations are automatically assumed to be guilty -- "courts, judges, other participants in the process and the news media tend to look at them as suspects."⁸⁷ One study revealed that more than 33% of those surveyed think that a company is "probably guilty" if accused of doing something wrong.⁸⁸ Again, in commenting on the importance of good media relations, Shapiro has said initial headlines "often make the sacred presumption of innocence a myth. In reality, we have the assumption of guilt."⁸⁹

The public's close scrutiny of crisis management may indicate that "the damage inflicted on a corporate reputation is determined more by its handling of the crisis than by the seriousness of the crisis itself," and that people "don't evaluate you on whether you make mistakes, but on how you fix them."⁹⁰ Furthermore, people are not very confident that companies in crises tell the truth either. A 1993 survey of 1,000 American adults revealed that more than half of the respondents thought that companies withhold information or give out false information when facing a crisis.⁹¹ What is even more important, however, is that people may be more upset over such communication tactics than they are about the actual crisis. The same study yielded 95% of respondents saying that "they are more offended when a company lies about a crisis than they are about the crisis itself."⁹² This is one area in which the military may have a better reputation than its corporate counterparts. A 1995 national survey of more than 350 journalists by The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center indicated that 84% of respondents believed that military personnel are honest when dealing with the news media.⁹³

Unfortunately, some communicators naively think that "the power of public opinion will pull all else with it - including the courts of public and judicial opinion" not realizing that relying completely on the traditional proactive public relations approach can be dangerous.⁹⁴ As one lawyer cautions, "Just as a public relations disaster may result when lawyers ignore reputation issues, public relations professionals who fail to recognize the legal issues in a crisis put their client at considerable risk."⁹⁵

Not only can practitioners unwittingly place their clients at jeopardy in a court of law, but they "must carefully watch what they say, must be sure the information is complete and honest, and must consider as many ramifications as time and deadline pressure permits. Often an innocent quote today is later recycled out of context."⁹⁶ Such was the case 50 years ago when a military public information officer issued a news release saying that officials from Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico had recovered a "flying disc."⁹⁷ The following day a second military news release was issued saying that the object recovered was just a weather balloon, but the damage was done. These initial public affairs actions were the catalyst for rumors that still continue five decades later and are responsible, in part, for the fact that 64% of Americans surveyed in a recent Time/USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll do not believe the Air Force's explanation of the Roswell incident.⁹⁸

As discussed, lawyers are naturally concerned about any statements made that would imply culpability during a crisis. Of course there can be advantages to admitting guilt quickly, especially when an organization is responsible for a crisis. When one child died and more than 300 people were sickened by *E. coli* bacteria linked to Jack in the Box hamburgers in 1993, "it took nearly a week for the company to admit publicly its responsibility for the poisonings."⁹⁹ The company at first tried traditional legal strategies of deflecting blame to state health authorities, then to its meat supplier. The result of the mishandled public relations response was that "nervous customers defected to other burger joints in droves." In contrast, when Odwalla Inc. went through a similar crisis in 1996 when one baby girl died from drinking apple juice containing *E. coli*, the company received high marks for public relations. The company was credited with "moving quickly to institute a voluntary recall, cooperating with the Food and Drug Administration, offering to pay the medical expenses of victims affected by contaminated Odwalla products, ... offering to refund the purchase price of any of the company's drinks - even those not being recalled - and for being responsive to the media."¹⁰⁰ The crisis did result in individual and class-action lawsuits against Odwalla, but the family of the dead girl did not pursue any litigation, saying they did not blame the company. Although the family's

decision was made largely for religious reasons, they lauded the company's efforts to meet with them, pay the girl's medical expenses, set up a fund in the girl's memory and renovate a park where the girl used to play.¹⁰¹

But, when responsibility for a crisis is not the company's fault or if responsibility has not been determined yet, the last thing a company wants to do is inadvertently say something that could be perceived as an admission of guilt. Spokespersons should never "speculate about cause, consequences or liability."¹⁰² Indeed, Air Force public affairs officers are to "refrain from discussing Air Force negligence or liability" following an accident.¹⁰³ Says one lawyer, "Companies should definitely express their concern, but that doesn't mean you have to take responsibility for whatever is happening to them if the responsibility actually lies elsewhere."¹⁰⁴ There is a way, as many practitioners know, to "vehemently deny any fault while at the same time expressing remorse that a problem has occurred."¹⁰⁵ The art of "apologia" -- which may or may not include an apology -- seeks to rephrase existing charges against a company into a more favorable context¹⁰⁶ or to "demonstrate the company's concern for the affected parties and avoid public anger directed at the organization."¹⁰⁷ Various techniques can be effective. Using words like "bad judgment," "mistake" or others that have "relatively insignificant ethical implications" is one technique.¹⁰⁸ Another technique is to issue statements of regret which "simultaneously express sorrow for what has happened yet minimize corporate responsibility for wrongdoing."¹⁰⁹ However, "words like *ashamed, concerned, disappointed, regret, sad, tragic, unfortunate, unintended, and unnecessary* don't seem to come easily to the lips of corporate executives or spokespeople."¹¹⁰

This technique is not without danger either, however. It is possible to overdo it with "too much *mea culpa*," making people "wonder what manner of wimp is running things."¹¹¹ Some people have criticized Texaco CEO Peter Bijur for admitting guilt too quickly following Texaco's racial crisis. Even though he didn't know what was on the tapes -- much of which turned out to be indecipherable -- he apologized publicly and agreed to form a special panel to look at the company's diversity programs.¹¹² Although the initial story was relatively short lived and the company's stock bounced back after only three weeks, some felt Bijur capitulated too easily by "unnecessarily giving away \$176 million that belonged to Texaco's shareholders," losing control over his own employment policies and perhaps creating a wider rift between black and white employees -- all without a guarantee that no more payments would be required or that the activist groups would decrease their pressure on the company.¹¹³

The Relationship Between Public Relations Practitioners and Lawyers

The Corporate Relationship

In 1996, Fitzpatrick published findings from a survey of 1,000 public relations practitioners regarding their relationship with lawyers. The data from the 376 responses she received indicated that, of the nearly 85% who worked regularly with an attorney, more than 40% described the relationship as "excellent" and nearly 45% described the relationship as "good." The remaining 15% described their relationship as "fair" or "poor."¹¹⁴ She concluded that these data could suggest "an increased appreciation by public relations professionals and attorneys for the other's function and/or a shared recognition of the need for a more interdisciplinary approach to organizational decision-making."¹¹⁵ Her argument is substantiated by the fact that those who did report an excellent or good relationship were those who worked with lawyers the most.

As demonstrated, because lawyers and public relations practitioners sometimes have different goals, conflict between the two is occasionally inevitable. But again, Fitzpatrick says that in reality these conflicts are usually resolved through cooperation.¹¹⁶ Of those she surveyed who had experienced a conflict with a lawyer on a general course of action, more than 39% said that the final decision "was a compromise or joint decision of public relations and legal counsel," 35% said that a company official made the final decision, eight percent said that they themselves made the decision, nine percent said that the lawyer made the final call, and about 10% said the conflict was resolved by some other means.

However, during litigation the numbers showed a marked increase in an attorney's influence in a decision involving public communication. Although more than 45% of the respondents reported that joint decisions were made regarding public relations activities during litigation, more than 25% of the time lawyers made the final decision and public relations personnel only made the final decision about three percent of the time.¹¹⁷ These figures support one author's view that "public relations in support of litigation is the most sensitive and least understood element of lawyer/PR collaboration."¹¹⁸ Fitzpatrick warns that her study shows lawyers are encroaching on the public relations field and indicates that "in situations involving conflicts with legal counsel over the public release of information ... the reality is that public relations professionals are not playing lead roles in these instances."¹¹⁹

So although it appears that lawyers and public relations practitioners usually do work well together and compromise on day-to-day public relations decisions, it also seems that, during crises, public relations practitioners

are not relied upon as the communication experts. Such encroachment by the legal community concerns John Budd, a former public relations practitioner who is now the CEO of the Omega Group. He believes that

no matter the choice of decision, public relations must be the architect of the communications -- in both content and context ... The signals called are primarily -- and properly -- by the lawyers. But, public relations has a legitimate role in assessing the long-term impact of perceived guilt on the company's -- and the CEO's -- credibility and reputation and a responsibility for adding this pivotal consideration to the decision-making process.¹²⁰

Also of concern to communicators is that, though there seems to be much compromising going on between lawyers and public relations practitioners, another study by Fitzpatrick and Rubin suggests that public relations people are doing more compromising than the lawyers. They conducted a content analysis of 39 sexual harassment crises and reported that in nearly two-thirds of the cases studied, traditional legal strategies, not public relations strategies, were used by spokespersons.¹²¹

The Air Force Relationship

There are currently approximately 400 public affairs officers and 1,300 judge advocates serving in the Air Force.¹²² Little research beyond "lessons learned" from specific crises has been conducted on the relationship between public affairs and legal functions. Some knowledge can be obtained, however, by examining the two career fields.

Newly acquired public affairs officers and judge advocates both receive specialized military training in their respective fields. The Public Affairs Officer Course at Fort Meade, MD, does have lesson plans which address some legal/mass communication issues such as libel and slander, The Privacy Act, The Freedom of Information Act, courts martial and criminal investigations.¹²³ The school does not have any specific lesson plans which address the relationship between public affairs and lawyers or the balance between public affairs and legal counsel, although one class devoted to crisis communication and accident response includes mentioning that "PA and Legal need to coordinate closely on those issues."¹²⁴ Similarly, the Judge Advocate General School at Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, does not have any specific curriculum units dedicated to the relationship between the two fields, but judge advocate students do get a one-hour block of training regarding public affairs.¹²⁵ Students also receive briefings on such things as media relations and professional ethics, and managing the flow of information during highly-publicized court proceedings.¹²⁶

The rank structure inherent in the military could affect the relationship since judge advocates usually outrank public affairs officers. This disparity of rank, and with it a corresponding disparity of power and influence, can be seen from the lower levels -- the individual Air Force base -- to the highest level where the senior Air Force lawyer is a two-star general while the top Air Force public affairs officer is only a one-star general. One possible reason for this disparity between the two fields may reflect the fact that, although public relations has been practiced for centuries, the legal vocation is older and more recognized as a profession.¹²⁷ Another reason could be the amount of higher education each brings to the table. At the entry level, all public affairs officers and judge advocates are required to have an undergraduate degree and receive technical training at Department of Defense and Air Force schools. But, the lawyers also must earn a law degree prior to becoming a judge advocate.

Air Force regulations occasionally address the relationship between military lawyers and public affairs officers, usually in the context of guidance regarding specific crises. For instance, media relations guidance for public affairs officers directs them to coordinate closely with judge advocates "before releasing any information" prior to a trial.¹²⁸ And while the guidance is somewhat detailed at times concerning what information is releasable and what information must be withheld regarding legal issues, a catch-all phrase still instructs public affairs officers to "seek the advice of the staff judge advocate on matters not clearly addressed here...."¹²⁹ Such instructions imply a very active role by judge advocates regarding public affairs decisions. This implication could be evidence that, in issues involving legal concerns, the real decision-making authority regarding public affairs lies with the legal community, not the public affairs community. Regardless, the bottom line is that the Air Force is supposed to "balance public interest in the administration of justice against the accused's right to a fair trial and right to privacy" when determining whether to release information regarding a criminal proceeding.¹³⁰

Finding Common Ground

Many lawyers and public relations people recognize the advantages of working together and know "what horses pulling beer wagons have long known -- that it is easier and more productive to pull together."¹³¹ Creighton Magid is one such attorney who believes that "a client is best served if legal and communications counsel work in concert, with an appreciation of the concerns each faces."¹³² Indeed, the Air Force Judge Advocate General states that "PA and JA offices, like all other staff agencies, are working toward the same goal. That is, to provide commanders with the best possible consolidated professional advice on issues impacting mission accomplishment."¹³³

And Fitzpatrick believes that, although lawyers and public relations people "often disagree on the best approach to crisis communications, each plays a valuable role in ensuring a company's success in surviving a crisis with both its reputation and legal standing intact."¹³⁴ These and other professionals who believe in a balanced legal and public relations approach indicate that education, training and planning are key to achieving that balance.

Education and Training

Although there are some public relations practitioners who do have both communications and legal training, most public relations people usually do not have a grasp of the law. Again, Fitzpatrick has some startling data. Her study of practitioners asked respondents about their familiarity with categories of U.S. law that could impact their organization and the majority said that they were just "somewhat" or "not at all" familiar.¹³⁵ Other results include:

More than one-half (51.1%) indicated no familiarity with SEC regulations; more than 40% reported no familiarity with commercial speech (41.1%), financial public relations (45.3%) or professional malpractice (48.0%); more than one-third (34.9%) said they were "not at all" familiar with contracts, and slightly more than 21% reported no familiarity with access to information laws.

One could say that, with such a lack of knowledge regarding law, it is not surprising that, in cases of conflict with lawyers during litigation, lawyers often have the upper hand in public relations decisions. Indeed, it is partly this lack of knowledge that Fitzpatrick suggests is leading communicators to make themselves and their clients legally liable.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, she argues that ignorance is no excuse, and that "in order to provide effective representation, practitioners must acquaint themselves with the legal issues involved both in their client organizations' operations and in communications."¹³⁷ The way to do this, of course, is interdisciplinary training for lawyers and public relations people because they "must begin to understand their respective roles in order to use the strengths of both professions."¹³⁸ According to Fitzpatrick, those communicators who are most successful during crises "do not rely totally on attorneys ... They recognize the importance of becoming legally literate themselves and seek out professional development opportunities in this area."¹³⁹

And although most lawyers do not have any mass communication training either, more and more are recognizing the benefits of learning how to do public relations. The American Bar Association provides media training for its officers, and many lawyers now view public relations as one of the tools at their disposal to help win a case. Certainly Shapiro is one of many attorneys who believe that "the lawyer's role as a spokesperson may be equally important to the outcome of a case as the skills of an advocate in the courtroom."¹⁴⁰ These attorneys may look to public relations experts for assistance just as they seek help from psychologists, jury selection consultants,

forensic scientists, and others.¹⁴¹ Indeed, one New York State Supreme Court justice has commented that "lawyers now feel it is the essence of their function to try the case in the public media."¹⁴² Air Force defense attorney Capt. Joseph Cazenavette agrees, saying he "wouldn't be surprised if defense counsels decide to go to the media more often," especially in situations like Lt. Flinn's adultery case.¹⁴³ Some attorneys also believe public relations can benefit attorneys not only by supporting their cases in the court of public opinion, but also by improving the image of the legal profession and marketing legal services to potential clients.¹⁴⁴

The Air Force already has begun some occasional cross-training between the two fields – reflecting the fact that "JA needs to be more conscious of the public affairs role and public affairs officers need to be savvy about the military justice system."¹⁴⁵ Public affairs officers have spoken at the Judge Advocate General School and judge advocates have spoken at some public affairs conferences. Recognizing the value of such opportunities, both sides are currently in the process of offering more. A media guide will be distributed to all Air Force legal offices, and coordination is underway to put information, not only about the military justice system in general but also facts about ongoing high-visibility court cases, on the Internet.¹⁴⁶ The Air Force also is establishing a Public Affairs Center for Excellence to conduct research and further develop the public affairs curriculum taught to officers as part of their professional military education.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, in the wake of recent cases which have attracted intense media scrutiny, public affairs officers and judge advocates have been aggressive in hosting background briefings with journalists to educate them on legal terms and the military justice system. Recently, a symposium was held at the Judge Advocate General School to discuss how the media affect the administration of military justice – attended by senior Air Force lawyers, public affairs officers and Lt. Flinn's defense attorney. Some senior public affairs officers and attorneys also are trying to convince Air Force officials to "loosen up" their interpretation of laws and regulations that traditionally have muzzled the Air Force from telling its side of the story.¹⁴⁸

Planning

The first rule of many crisis communicators is borrowed from the Boy Scouts: be prepared.¹⁴⁹ This is doubly true in a crisis where there is "little time for group meetings or consensus."¹⁵⁰ Over and over again this sort of statement is echoed:

- "advocates can avoid turf problems during crises by establishing a positive relationship *before* crisis strikes"¹⁵¹

- "when legal proceedings begin, particularly those involving high-profile individuals, a strategy concerning the media must be jointly planned"¹⁵²
- "encourage management to involve its corporate lawyers early in the crisis planning process ... it is then possible to set guidelines for what can and cannot be said when a crisis does happen"¹⁵³
- "the necessity of merging law and public relations leads to an even greater need for pre-crisis planning by representatives in both fields"¹⁵⁴
- commanders, staff judge advocates and public affairs officers must "work together at every step"¹⁵⁵

Similarly, Air Force attorney James Swanson has stated that "it has never been more critical for judge advocates and public affairs officers, under the direction of commanders, to formulate and pre-plan cohesive media responses that tell the Air Force story as completely and persuasively as possible, yet at the same time do not impinge upon or impair the judicial process. That is a balance, I am convinced, that can be struck."¹⁵⁶ But given the importance of planning, a 1995 survey of public relations practitioners found that less than 60% "worked in organizations with written crisis plans."¹⁵⁷ Although this is up 10% from a similar survey conducted 10 years ago, it is unknown how many of the crisis plans actually encourage cooperation between lawyers and communicators. Similarly, although nearly all Air Force public affairs offices have what are known as "crash kits" which include detailed plans for aircraft accidents, natural disasters and other such crises, it is unknown how many offices have a corresponding plan for dealing with legal crises like high-visibility courts martial and criminal investigations.

Summary

The literature shows conflict can and does occur between public relations professionals and lawyers, especially during crises, and that there are advantages and disadvantages to using either a strictly legal or a strictly public relations response. As conflict theory suggests, the best results occur when a combined approach is used by lawyers and public relations people who work closely together in cooperation. Although much of the research regarding the relationship between lawyers and public relations people in corporate service is self-reported by public relations people themselves, it indicates that a relatively good relationship exists, but that problems still remain which can affect how an organization fares in both a court of law and the court of public opinion. Professionals and researchers from both areas agree that interdisciplinary training among lawyers and public relations practitioners and planning between the two before crises occur are needed to improve the relationship -- further validating conflict theorists who propose similar techniques to resolving conflict.

Research Questions

There are no data on the relationship between Air Force public affairs and legal functions. However, the literature review allows one to assume that, although in general public affairs officers and judge advocates work well together, some conflict exists between the two functions that may result in destructive consequences for the Air Force as a whole. This study itself generated conflict between the two functions at the highest Air Force level when the legal community refused to officially support the research because some feared the survey questions had the potential of "artificially creating a perception that PA and JA offices are 'opponents' when it comes to public relations issues."¹⁵⁸ Using conflict theory as a model, destructive results occur when the Air Force as a whole loses in a court of law, the court of public opinion, or both; and productive results occur when the Air Force wins in both courts. Finally the literature suggests ways to encourage organizations to limit the destructive effects of conflict and use problem-solving techniques. Such tactics include meetings between the two to adjust perceptions and attitudes, interdisciplinary education and/or training, information sharing, joint planning, discussion of alternative solutions, and building consensus.

However, these assumptions should be explored further because the literature does not indicate what actually holds true for the U.S. Air Force. Specific questions need to be answered before making recommendations on how to improve the relationship between the two so that the Air Force, as an organization, is better served. The questions include the following: What are the characteristics and frequency of conflict between the two? How is such conflict usually resolved? What are the usual results to the Air Force as a whole? And finally, how can the Air Force decrease the amount of conflict between public affairs and legal functions or productively resolve existing conflicts?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sampling

An on-line survey was conducted of Air Force public affairs officers, judge advocates and commanders. At the time of the survey, approximately 400 public affairs officers, 1,300 judge advocates and 160 commanders (wing level and above) were serving on active duty in the Air Force. Population lists with name, rank and location were provided by the Air Force, and a census was taken of the public affairs officers and commanders. A random sample

of approximately 425 judge advocates was taken using skip increments. After the judge advocate sample was taken, the researcher realized that the population list provided by Air Force did not include any generals. Since the most senior lawyers would likely have the most impact on Air Force policy, the researcher added the names of these five officers to the random sample.

A few design concerns existed. A recent survey of mailing lists by a commercial firm found only 37% of electronic mail addresses were accurate at any given time.¹⁵⁹ And although another company which develops and markets electronic-survey software and services reported between 70 and 80 percent of email addresses are accurate,¹⁶⁰ the researcher was concerned that some members of the survey populations would not be reachable through electronic mail because they lack Internet access or because of out-of-date electronic email addresses. To attempt to alleviate this concern, the researcher traveled to the Pentagon to compile electronic mail addresses via phone and using existing email address books. By doing so, the researcher was able to obtain what he believed to be correct email addresses for 372 public affairs officers, 387 judge advocates and 163 commanders. Even so, when the researcher sent the survey emails out three weeks later, approximately 15% were returned as undeliverable. Still, this was an improvement over the percentage of email addresses that are typically accurate in electronic surveys. After the emails were sent out, the researcher encountered what may be inevitable in an online survey conducted without the use of respondent identification and password security options. A few respondents asked the researcher if they could encourage others in their office or at their military installation to fill out the questionnaires too. The researcher granted the requests provided only those in the target population filled out the questionnaires. For example, when a lawyer asked if he could refer other lawyers in his office to the survey web site, the researcher asked that he only refer active-duty legal officers – not civilians or enlisted personnel – to ensure the integrity of the survey population. To the researcher's knowledge, this added seven names to the judge advocate sample. However, the researcher had no way of knowing exactly how often this happened, since survey recipients may have referred others to the web site without informing him. As a result of undeliverable emails and the knowledge of some people being referred to the survey, the final survey samples were 340 public affairs officers (85% of the total population), 316 judge advocates (23% of the total population) and 134 commanders (82% of the total population).

Another design concern was that subjects might have difficulty responding because of random computer problems such as one or more computer servers being down for service, busy phone lines to connect to a service

provider, etc. To address this concern, the researcher gave recipients nearly four weeks to respond so that most should have been able to connect and complete the survey even if such random computer problems existed at their first attempt. The researcher received 13 emails from survey recipients who were having problems accessing the web site, but the researcher asked them to keep trying, and since the researcher only received feedback from two of those individuals indicating they could not connect to the web site after further tries, indications are that most of these people eventually were able to connect. The researcher sent these two remaining recipients email versions of the survey (with the questions as part of the email instead of on the web page), and received their input via a return email. The researcher received one survey response via regular mail. The researcher received 18 blank, incomplete or duplicate survey forms, indicating that either an error occurred in the transmission, the respondent sent the response before he/she was finished, or sent the survey response twice. These responses were not coded.

A third concern was whether the response rate would be high enough to permit generalization to the three populations. In hopes of increasing the response rates, the researcher asked the Air Force's top public affairs officer and the senior judge advocate to send out a joint message encouraging commanders and their subordinates to complete the survey. However, because the Air Force Judge Advocate General decided not to officially support the survey, he refused to provide any endorsement. Nevertheless, the Air Force's Director of Public Affairs did send a message out to public affairs officers prior to the questionnaires being sent out, and the researcher personally contacted major command public affairs officers to urge them to encourage commanders and judge advocates to participate. Two weeks into the survey the response rate was approximately 17% so the researcher sent out reminder emails to survey recipients.

A final design concern existed regarding the survey instruments themselves. Since survey respondents were asked for self-reported information, one could suspect that biased information might have been obtained. However, by asking similar questions regarding conflict among all three groups of participants – public affairs officers, judge advocates and commanders – the data obtained are more rigorous than would have been the case had only one group been surveyed.

Survey Instruments

Each recipient received an electronic mail from the researcher "pointing" them to the web site where the survey was stored. After approximately two weeks the researcher sent out reminder emails to recipients to encourage

survey completion. A few days before the completed questionnaires were due, the researcher also sent out a reminder message to The Air Force PA Forum, an online discussion group of public affairs practitioners.

The three questionnaires were developed based on the literature review and from discussions with senior Air Force public affairs officers and judge advocates. To achieve greater validity, the questions were a combination of specific multiple choice and open-ended formats. A few questions were group specific regarding knowledge of legal or public affairs topics, but most questions were general to all recipients. Demographics and/or job knowledge questions were asked in Part 1 of the questionnaires. Part 2 included questions about the frequency and characteristics of conflict. Respondents were asked in Part 3 about how such conflict is usually resolved and what the usual results of conflict are for the Air Force. Finally, Part 4 of the questionnaires requested input from respondents on how to decrease conflict or resolve conflict better. The instruments were pretested on one or two members of each group and minor changes were made based on the feedback received. The questions generated some conflict in the legal community because a few senior Air Force lawyers believed the wording of some questions implied that destructive conflict necessarily exists between public affairs and legal functions and that the win-lose terminology used by conflict theorists was too confrontational. Based on this feedback, the researcher changed the wording of two questions.

Coding and Data Analysis

The structure of the web survey and a common gateway interface program allowed the submitted information from respondents to be automatically converted into numerical data, which then was mailed electronically to the researcher. The researcher then put this content into a data base and analyzed it using statistical computer software. While most of the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequencies, some relationships were tested as post hoc analyses.

The common gateway interface transmitted the responses to open-ended questions verbatim as text in the electronic mail sent to the researcher. The researcher coded these data into categories which were pretested by an independent coder. The pretest, using one open-ended answer from each survey population, yielded a coefficient of reliability of 88%, using the equations $C.R. = 2M/(N_1 + N_2)$ where M is the number of coding decisions made in agreement, N_1 is the number of coding decisions made by the researcher and N_2 is the number of coding decisions made by the independent coder.¹⁶¹ Although this method does not account for the level of agreement by chance

alone, the researcher determined this method was the most realistically feasible because of the high number of responses and categories from the open-ended data.

Following the pretest, the researcher and the independent coder each individually categorized the 220 open-ended responses, yielding an initial 75% agreement rate. Following a second detailed review of the open-ended data and the coding sheets by both the researcher and the independent coder, each made a number of coding changes, resulting in a final 96% agreement rate. The researcher acknowledges that such a large increase in agreement may seem atypical. However, each disagreement from the first coding procedure was reviewed by the researcher and the independent coder. Changes were necessary because both the researcher and the coder neglected to find some of the categories during the first coding procedure, some of the categories not being mutually exclusive during the first coding session and some military jargon confused the independent coder. Despite the large increase in agreement, there were some coding decisions that continued to be disagreed over – and each individual held firm to his original decisions. After these coding discussions occurred, the researcher used his own coding decisions for analysis.

Response Rate

The researcher received 248 responses or 31% of the total number of questionnaires sent out (790). The public affairs response rate was 38% (130 responses), the commander response rate was 38% (51 responses), and the judge advocate response rate was 21% (67 responses).

Response rates from electronic surveys are not easy to predict. In addition to limitations associated with mail surveys, electronic surveys are dependent on recipients' experience with computers and technology.¹⁶² In this case, recipients were expected to have a familiarity with the Internet. Although most Air Force personnel by now have become accustomed to conducting business on the web, the researcher likely lost a few respondents with the extra step of requiring respondents to go from email to a web site. The response rate also is affected by the length of the survey, the amount of time given to fill out the survey, the respondents' connection to the survey topic, whether any incentive was given and whether any follow-up reminders were sent. Decisive Technology Corporation has received a 15-40 percent response rate for an electronic survey sent with no incentives and no follow-up reminders and a 20-45 percent response rate for a similar survey sent with both an incentive and follow-up reminders.¹⁶³ Their response rate from an electronic survey most similar to the researcher – with no incentive and one follow-up reminder – yielded 30%. These comparisons show that the researcher's response rate of 31% is comparable to the rate

received by others conducting electronic surveys. Additionally, Dr. Marshall Rice, a professor of market research at York University, believes that a response rate of more than 30% is "excellent."¹⁶⁴

However with only 32% of all public affairs officers, 31% of all commanders and 5% of all judge advocates having responded, the data cannot necessarily be generalized to any of the three survey populations. Still, the data gathered were useful in determining what some members of the survey populations thought about the relationship between public affairs and judge advocate functions.

FINDINGS

General Information

Demographics

Of the 130 public affairs officers who responded, approximately half were company-grade officers -- lieutenants and captains -- and half were field-grade officers -- majors, lieutenant colonels, colonels and above. Their years of public affairs experience ranged from six months to 33 years, with a mean of 10 years. Of the 67 judge advocates who responded, more than half were field grade officers and the remainder were company-grade officers. Their years of legal experience ranged from one to 30 years, with a mean of 11 years. Of the 51 commanders who responded nearly 65% were at the wing level (usually each Air Force base has one wing commander who is in charge at that installation), 18% were at the numbered air force level (in charge of many Air Force bases), 16% were at the major command level (in charge of a few numbered Air Forces) and 2% were at the unified command level (one of the highest military commands containing all types of service members -- Air Force, Army, Navy, etc.). Their years of command experience ranged from one to 33 years, with a mean of seven years.

Job Knowledge

The public affairs and judge advocate respondents were asked about their knowledge of areas involving legal and public affairs issues. Both appeared to be more familiar with The Privacy Act and The Freedom of Information Act but less familiar with other issues that are common to both functions (See Table 4-1 and 4-2).

Table 4-1

Public Affairs Officer Knowledge Of...	Not At All Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar
Civil Litigation	25%	69%	7%
Military Justice System	2%	73%	25%
Criminal Investigations	12%	75%	13%
Censorship	9%	52%	39%
The Privacy Act		48%	52%
The Freedom of Information Act		57%	43%

Table 4-2

Judge Advocate Knowledge Of...	Not At All Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar
Media Relations	12%	66%	22%
DoD Principles of Information	49%	34%	16%
Censorship	21%	48%	31%
The Privacy Act	2%	48%	51%
The Freedom of Information Act		46%	54%

When asked if their offices had any crisis communication plans that specifically dealt with legal issues such as high visibility courts martial and investigations, the majority (69%) of public affairs respondents said they did not.

Frequency and Characteristics of Conflict

Public Affairs and Judge Advocate respondents indicated similarly how much conflict exists between the two functions. However, the commander respondents believed conflict occurred much less (See Table 4-3). The majority of all three groups said that there was more conflict during a crisis (See Table 4-4).

Table 4-3

How Much Conflict Exists Between PA and JA?

Respondents	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Public Affairs Officers	4%	33%	47%	15%	1%
Judge Advocates	2%	37%	49%	10%	2%
Commanders	10%	57%	33%		
Combined Data	4%	39%	45%	11%	1%

Table 4-4

Is there more conflict during a crisis?

Respondents	Yes	No	The Same	N/A
Public Affairs Officers	47%	25%	25%	2%
Judge Advocates	63%	19%	16%	2%
Commanders	39%	35%	22%	4%
Combined Data	50%	26%	22%	2%

All respondents were asked to identify the major characteristics of conflict between public affairs and legal functions. It appeared that different missions, objectives and priorities of the two functions; balancing the "right to know" and privacy rights; and the media environment characterized much of the conflict between the two (See Table 4-5). Approximately four percent of all respondents thought this question was "not applicable."

Table 4-5

Major characteristics of conflict between public affairs and legal functions

Respondents	Disparity of Rank	Different missions, objectives, priorities	Media Environment	Lack of Info Sharing	Balancing "right to know" and privacy rights	Lack of education and training
Public Affairs Officers	16%	64%	67%	40%	69%	44%
Judge Advocates	2%	68%	52%	28%	42%	55%
Commanders	2%	57%	49%	28%	67%	26%
Combined Data	9%	63%	59%	34%	61%	43%

Approximately 25% of the public affairs respondents indicated that "other" characteristics of conflict existed. These responses were coded into 15 categories (See Table 4-6 for a list of the most frequent themes).

Table 4-6

"Other" Major Characteristics of Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of PA Respondents Who Gave This Answer
JA hesitates to release information or doesn't provide timely, accurate, understandable information	7
Disagreement between PA and JA and between armed services regarding interpretation of regulations, policies and/or The Privacy Act	6
Media and/or defense attorney actions create environment where AF cannot respond without jeopardizing the legal process or an individual's rights	5
PA and JA inherently have different objectives, goals, tactics, behaviors	4
PA doesn't understand JA and/or JA doesn't understand PA	4
Disparity of experience, rank, credibility between PA and JA and they are treated differently	4

Approximately 22% of the judge advocate respondents indicated that "other" characteristics of conflict existed. These responses were classified into 11 categories (See Table 4-7 for a list of the most frequent themes).

Table 4-7

"Other" Major Characteristics of Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of JA Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Disagreements over what information is releasable and what information should be withheld	2
Disparity of experience, rank, and/or credibility between PA and JA	2
PA doesn't understand JA and/or JA doesn't understand PA	2
Judicial concerns/privacy rights/undue influence vs. "the right of the public to know"	2

Approximately 17% of the commander respondents indicated that "other" characteristics of conflict existed.

These responses were classified into five categories (See Table 4-8).

Table 4-8

"Other" Major Characteristics of Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of Commander Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Conflict exists when commanders allows it to exist – failure of command	2
Reluctance to be candid because of political factors	1
PA and JA inherently have different objectives, goals, tactics, behaviors	1
Fear of lawsuits	1
Tendency to withhold information to protect the accused	1

When the "other" categories from all three groups were combined for this question, six themes were found to be the most frequently occurring (See Table 4-9). Additionally, 10 respondents indicated that little or no conflict existed between public affairs and legal functions.

Table 4-9

"Other" Major Characteristics of Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of ALL Respondents Who Gave This Answer
JA hesitates to release information or doesn't provide timely, accurate, understandable information	7
Media and/or defense attorney actions create environment where the AF cannot respond without jeopardizing the legal process or an individual's rights - tendency to withhold information to protect the accused	7
Disagreement between PA and JA and between armed services regarding interpretation of regulations, policies and/or The Privacy Act	6
PA doesn't understand JA and/or JA doesn't understand PA	6
Disparity of experience, rank, credibility between PA and JA and they are treated differently	6
PA and JA inherently have different objectives, goals, tactics, behaviors	5

How Conflict Is Usually Resolved

Survey respondents were asked how conflict between public affairs and legal functions is usually resolved. The majority of all the respondents felt that conflicts between the two were resolved through consensus where both sides were satisfied with the decision. However, the data also show that, during conflicts, the legal course of action is taken 25 times more often than the public affairs course of action (See Table 4-10). Approximately 11% of all the respondents said this question was "not applicable" and one percent did not answer the question.

Table 4-10

How is conflict between PA and JA usually resolved?

Respondents	PA course of action is taken (win-lose)	JA course of action is taken (win-lose)	Compromise: Both sides are unsatisfied (lose-lose)	Consensus: Both sides are satisfied (win-win)
Public Affairs Officers	2%	28%	12%	52%
Judge Advocates	2%	24%	18%	40%
Commanders		18%	10%	55%
Combined Data	1%	25%	13%	49%

Respondents also were asked what the usual results were for the Air Force as a whole after a conflict between legal and public affairs has been resolved. While 22% of respondents felt this question was "not applicable" and one percent did not answer the question, the majority of those who did respond indicated that, following a conflict between legal and public affairs functions, the Air Force usually achieves its legal goals but loses public support. Only 31% thought the Air Force achieves its legal goals and wins public support following a conflict between the two (See Table 4-11).

Table 4-11

What are the usual results for the Air Force after a conflict has been resolved?

Respondents	Wins public support but does not achieve legal goals (win-lose)	Achieves legal goals but loses public support (win-lose)	Loses public support and does not achieve legal goals (lose-lose)	Wins public support and achieves legal goals (win-win)
Public Affairs Officers	2%	42%	5%	31%
Judge Advocates		27%	19%	25%
Commanders		31%	8%	37%
Combined Data	1%	36%	9%	31%

How To Decrease Conflict or Better Resolve Conflict

All respondents were asked to suggest ways to decrease conflict between public affairs and legal functions or how to better resolve conflict. They suggested that the best ways to do so are to have interdisciplinary education/training for public affairs officers and judge advocates; encourage more joint planning and information sharing; and to clarify the policies regarding the release of information and privacy rights (See Table 4-12).

Approximately two percent of all respondents thought the question was "not applicable."

Table 4-12

How To Decrease Conflict or Better Resolve Conflict

Respondents	Education and Training	More info sharing	Clarify policies	Joint Planning	Meetings to adjust feelings, attitudes, etc.	More consensus building	Do what is best for the AF
Public Affairs Officers	72%	67%	58%	63%	44%	48%	58%
Judge Advocates	66%	57%	51%	72%	40%	39%	40%
Commanders	47%	43%	57%	51%	28%	33%	49%
Combined Data	65%	59%	56%	63%	40%	42%	51%

More than 20% of public affairs respondents indicated that "other" ways to decrease conflict existed. These responses were coded into 18 categories (See Table 4-13 for a list of the most frequent themes).

Table 4-13

"Other" Ways to Decrease Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of PA Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Interdisciplinary education and/or training between PA and JA	7
More communication/respect/understanding between PA and JA	5
Do what is best for the Air Force" not what is best for PA, JA or individuals	4
Need to get the Air Force side of the story out without damaging legal case	4
Realize the importance of public opinion	3
Educate commanders on PA/JA issues	3
Educate PA's on how to establish good relationship with commanders and to establish themselves despite rank/credibility disparity with JA	2

Nine percent of judge advocate respondents indicated that "other" ways to decrease conflict existed. These responses were classified into seven categories (See Table 4-14).

Table 4-14

"Other" Ways to Decrease Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of JA Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Planning before a crisis occurs	1
Higher rank for PAO's	1
Explain military laws and information release policies to the media/public	1
Better coordination between JA and PA	1
PA shouldn't be the only ones to decide what is "in the best interests of the Air Force"	1
Better understanding of what the commander wants to do	1
Information should not be released if it will jeopardize legal proceedings	1

Approximately 25% of the commander respondents indicated that "other" ways to decrease conflict existed.

These responses were classified into seven categories (See Table 4-15).

Table 4-15

"Other" Ways to Decrease Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of Commander Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Commanders are the ones responsible for JA and PA decisions and for ensuring a good relationship between the two and they need to be educated on JA/PA issues	6
More meetings, communications, understanding between PA and JA	2
PA and/or JA need to share information more	1
Civilian appointees need military perspective	1
JA needs to stop withholding information	1
PA needs to stop speculating and admit wrongdoing if it's true	1
Do case studies to find out the best way to handle legal cases	1

When the "other" categories from all three groups were combined for this question, six themes were found to be the most frequently occurring (See Table 4-16). Additionally, six respondents said that little or no conflict exists between public affairs and legal functions.

Table 4-16

"Other" Ways to Decrease Conflict Between PA and JA	Number of ALL Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Commanders are the ones responsible for JA and PA decisions and for ensuring a good relationship between the two and/or commanders need to be educated on JA/PA issues	9
More meetings, communication, coordination, respect/understanding between PA and JA	8
Interdisciplinary education and/or training between PA and JA	7
Do what is in the "best interest of the Air Force" not what is best for PA, JA or individuals	4
Need to get the AF side of the story out without damaging legal proceedings	4
Realize the importance of public opinion	3

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other thoughts about how to improve the relationship between public affairs and legal functions. Half of the public affairs respondents gave input to this question. The answers then were coded into 19 categories (See Table 4-17 for a list of most frequent themes).

Table 4-17

"Other" Thoughts on How to Improve the Relationship between PA and JA	Number of PA Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Planning, meetings, communication and understanding/respect are key	16
JA and PA need interdisciplinary education/training and/or need to exercise together	15
Both PA and JA need to be open minded and willing to compromise, work as a team toward consensus and what is best for the Air Force	11
The need to protect the legal system and people's individual rights during a legal case hurts the Air Force in the court of public opinion. Need to be able to respond to media queries before/during a trial. The AF needs to review/clarify laws/regulations/policies/instructions/rules on releasing information, especially new media/legal environments. The Air Force should come up with some guidance on how to handle high-visibility legal cases	11
The relationship between PA and JA is determined by the commander - need to educate him/her and other regarding JA and/or PA function(s)	10

More than 45% of the judge advocate respondents gave input to this question. The answers were classified into 20 categories (See Table 4-18 for a list of most frequent themes)

Table 4-18

"Other" Thoughts on How to Improve the Relationship between PA and JA	Number of JA Respondents Who Gave This Answer
JA and/or PA don't understand the other's functions – need to be educated or trained in the other functions so they can see the bigger picture	9
More meetings, communication and understanding/respect are needed between PA and JA	7
AF regulations on releasing information are too strict and we need to be able to get facts of a case out to the public before/during a trial, especially if the defendant has already gone public or if the case will draw media attention	5
Need to balance fair trial and privacy rights with the "right of the people to know"	4

More than half of the commander respondents gave input to this question. The answers were classified into 13 categories (See Table 4-19 for a list of most frequent themes).

Table 4-19

"Other" Thoughts on How to Improve the Relationship between PA and JA	Number of Commander Respondents Who Gave This Answer
There should be more involvement in the relationship between JA and PA	7
There is a lack of information sharing/communication between PA and JA. They should meet more to plan ahead, talk more – especially about specific cases, and understand each other's perspective and responsibilities	5
Need PA and JA to work as a team in determining what is in the best interest of the Air Force	4
JA and PA need to have interdisciplinary education/training to learn about each other	4

When the "other" categories from all three groups were combined for this question, six themes were found to be the most frequently occurring (See Table 4-20). Additionally, 21 respondents said that little or no conflict exists between public affairs and legal functions

Table 4-20

"Other" Thoughts on How to Improve the Relationship between PA and JA	Number of ALL Respondents Who Gave This Answer
Planning, meetings, communication and understanding/respect are key to a good relationship and/or there is a lack of information sharing going on and/or	31
JA and PA need interdisciplinary education/training and/or need to exercise together	28
The need to protect the legal system and people's individual rights during a legal case hurts the AF in the court of public opinion. Need to be able to respond to media queries before/during a trial. The Air Force needs to review/clarify laws/regulations/policies/instructions/ rules on releasing information, especially new media/legal environments. The Air Force should come up with some guidance on how to handle high-visibility legal cases. Need to balance the "right to know" with the right to fair legal proceedings and individual's rights	25
The relationship between PA and JA is determined by the commander -- need to educate him/her and other regarding JA and/or PA function(s). There needs to be more commander involvement in the relationship	17
Both PA and JA need to be open minded and willing to compromise, work as a team toward consensus and what is best for the AF	15
JA thinks legal is the most important and/or JA needs to be willing to listen to PA advice when deciding legal stuff and need to be available to PA and provide them timely information	13

Post Hoc Analysis

The researcher examined the relationships between the amount of conflict and rank, years of public affairs, legal or command experience, job knowledge and whether or not an office had public affairs plans for dealing with legal issues. Only three relationships appeared to be statistically significant. However, given these small sample sizes and relatively low response rates, these results cannot be rigorously inferred to the populations.

The first statistically significant relationship found was between the familiarity of public affairs officers with criminal investigations and the frequency of conflict between public affairs and legal functions (chi-square = 15.9, $p < .05$) – the more familiar public affairs officers were with this topic, the more frequent the conflict. Two other significant relationships uncovered were between the familiarity of judge advocates with censorship and media relations and the frequency of conflict (censorship chi-square = 16.2, $p < .05$; media relations chi square = 16.6, $p < .05$) – the more familiar judge advocates were with these topics, the more frequent the conflict.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The findings support previous literature which indicates that, although public relations practitioners and lawyers do work well together, conflict between the two does exist which can have a negative impact on an organization as a whole. Some of this conflict, as theorists have stated for years, is inherent in any relationship and can have both productive and negative consequences.

Overall, the researcher was satisfied with the response rates from both the public affairs officers and commanders – 38% each. This shows these two groups perhaps identified with the research topic and had opinions and concerns they wanted to share. In particular, the researcher was surprised that so many commanders participated in the survey – it was suspected that this group, due to the tremendous time constraints on chief executive officers, would have the lowest response rate. Quite the contrary occurred – not only did a large number of commanders respond, but many indicated that the relationship between public affairs and legal functions was the responsibility of the commander and that he/she needed to be educated on PA/JA issues and actively involved in the relationship.

However, the researcher was disappointed in the low response rate (21%) from the legal community. This could have occurred for several reasons. First, the judge advocates may not have identified as much with the research topic. Second, these data and the literature suggest that lawyers often have the upper hand when dealing with public affairs issues, due to a credibility or power gap between the two functions. Although the researcher received valuable information from many lawyers, some attorneys may not have been willing to discuss an issue which might result in their losing the control they already have over the relationship. Third, because the survey was not endorsed by the senior Air Force judge advocate, there may have been less incentive among Air Force attorneys to participate.

Frequency and Characteristics of Conflict

Both lawyer and public affairs groups were very similar in the amount of conflict perceived – which corresponds almost exactly to the data Fitzpatrick gathered in a survey of public relations practitioners. In her study, more than 40% of respondents said the relationship was “excellent” – in this study approximately 40% of respondents said that conflict “rarely” or “never” existed. Similarly, in the Fitzpatrick study approximately 15% of respondents

said the relationship was "fair" or "poor" – and in this study 16% of public affairs officers and 12% of lawyers said that conflict "usually" or "always" existed. Interestingly, commanders saw the least amount of conflict in the relationship. This could be because many conflicts may be resolved between public affairs and legal functions without commander involvement. However during crises, which necessarily involve more commander involvement, the majority of all three samples indicated that conflict increases.

And just as many of Fitzpatrick's respondents indicated they had a lack of knowledge regarding some legal topics, there appears to be a knowledge gap with Air Force public affairs officers also. Although they indicated that they are well-versed in Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act issues, 75% said they were "not at all" or only "somewhat" familiar with the military justice system and 87% said the same about their familiarity with criminal investigations – two areas that increasingly have public affairs implications. The same was true for the judge advocate respondents – although they appeared to have a good working knowledge of Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act issues, 78% said they were "not at all" or only "somewhat" familiar with media relations and 83% said the same about the DoD Principles of Information which provide the foundation for the military's information release policies. But although knowledge of the other's function is important to both communicators and lawyers, these data indicate that an increase in knowledge will not translate necessarily to a decrease in conflict. In fact, this analysis shows that, depending on the topic, more knowledge could increase the amount of conflict. The researcher is unsure why this occurred – it could be that, as one becomes more familiar with a given topic and more confident in one's own knowledge, he or she is less willing to compromise.

The combined data from all three samples reflected similar characteristics of conflict between public affairs and legal functions. There was a recognition that some conflict is inevitable due to competing objectives, goals, etc. However, the release of information seemed to be a major source of conflict. More than 60% said that the balance between the "right of the public to know" and privacy rights or the right to fair legal proceedings contributed to conflict and nearly as many said that the current media environment did also. These two characteristics go hand in hand and feed off each other as many recent high-visibility court cases have shown. Making the situation worse may be a lack of education, training or information sharing between the two fields. Many respondents admitted they did not know as much about the other function as they should. And although the public affairs respondents were the

ones who more frequently acknowledged a disparity in rank, credibility, pay and treatment between themselves and lawyers, some Air Force attorneys and commanders mentioned these discrepancies as well.

How is Conflict Usually Resolved?

The public affairs respondents saw more consensus (win-win) results from conflicts with the legal community than did the lawyers, although both agreed that approximately 43% of the time there is a win-lose or a lose-lose resolution to a conflict – where either the public affairs or the legal counsel is taken or a compromise is made where both sides are unsatisfied with the decision. Combining the data from all three samples, one sees that about half of the time conflict is resolved through a win-win solution. The fact that the two experience lose-lose or win-lose results nearly 40% of the time shows that there is room for improvement in how conflicts are resolved. But what is even more significant is that the respondents felt that legal counsel is heeded more than the public affairs counsel by a factor of 25 to 1.

That being said, the researcher believes it is not important whether public affairs or legal wins or loses in any given situation, unless the result is a loss for the Air Force. But, these data indicate that the Air Force may only experience a win-win result -- win public support and achieve its legal goals -- 30% of the time following a conflict between public affairs and legal functions. Thirty-six percent of the time the Air Force achieves its legal goals but does not win public support (win-lose), less than one percent of the time the service wins public support but does not achieve its legal goals (win-lose), and nine percent of the time loses public support and does not achieve its legal goals (lose-lose). When one looks at the previous data on how conflicts between the two functions are resolved, there is a similar disparity in the percentage of times the legal counsel is taken over the public affairs counsel or when a compromise is made between the two where both are still unsatisfied with the decision. So it appears that it *does* matter that public affairs is losing while legal is winning because the Air Force as a whole is losing at times when it could be winning.

More than 20% of all the respondents indicated that the question regarding the usual results for the Air Force after a conflict between public affairs and legal functions has been resolved was "not applicable." This could be for several reasons. Those who felt there was rarely or never any conflict between the two may not have felt the question applied to their situation. And, some may have not agreed with the "win-lose" terminology used by the researcher, as a few wrote in their survey responses.

Recommendations

The findings do indicate there is a need for improvement in the relationship between Air Force legal and public affairs functions. There is no way to remove all conflict, nor is there a desire to since some conflict is healthy in any relationship. As Gen. William Moorman, a senior Air Force lawyer wrote in his survey response:

There is in our Constitution an inherent tension between competing rights: my freedom to say whatever comes to mind, and your freedom not to be panicked when I yell 'fire' in a crowded theater when there is no fire, the public's right to know what goes on within its government and the government's right to have its internal decision-making process operate free from outside interference, one person's right to put anything they want on the Internet and another's right not to have their children exposed to graphic sexual material. This inherent tension is not something to be resolved by hard and fast rules, regulations or survey results. The tension between competing interest is what makes our democracy work. We should expect it, value it, and applaud it. Public Affairs Officers, Judge Advocates and Commanders need to work together within that framework to make the best possible decisions for the Air Force, but there will never be 'one size fits all.'

Using such a foundation and the data from the respondents themselves, the researcher makes recommendations, not to completely eliminate conflict, but to limit destructive conflicts, better resolve constructive conflicts and improve the quality of counsel given to Air Force leaders. Some or many of these recommendations are nothing new to Air Force communicators and lawyers – the relationship between legal and public affairs functions is receiving more attention recently as a result of recent Air Force crises. As mentioned in the literature review, inroads already are being made to begin more communication, more planning, and more cross-training.

First, the data clearly show that the balance between public affairs and legal functions is disproportionately weighed in favor of legal concerns, sometimes resulting in destructive consequences to the Air Force. If the Air Force wants to change this and succeed more in the court of public opinion, commanders must realize the far-reaching effects public approval have on an organization, give greater weight to public affairs counsel and balance legal and public affairs concerns accordingly.

Second, there is a need for continued interdisciplinary education and training among public affairs and legal personnel as well as education for other officers – commanders in particular. As these data show, more knowledge of legal/public affairs issues will not necessarily decrease the amount of conflict between the two functions, but it could affect how those conflicts are resolved. The Defense Information School and the Judge Advocate General School should include curriculum units on the relationship and balance between public affairs and legal counsel. The Defense Information School should broaden its existing units regarding criminal investigations and the military justice system, and the Judge Advocate General School should broaden its curriculum units regarding media relations and the DoD

Principles of Information. Although the professional military education schools for officers all include curriculum regarding public affairs – from readings and discussions to media training, mock press conferences and war-gaming media exercises – the feedback from officers at these schools indicate they want more opportunities to learn about public affairs.¹⁶⁵ The Air Force should give them what they are asking for and these opportunities also should include discussions on how to most effectively balance public affairs and legal counsel. Finally, public affairs offices worldwide which are not already doing so should expand their media training to include judge advocates, investigating officials and any others who might be involved in legal/public affairs issues.

Many respondents, especially the commanders and public affairs officers who often cited recent Air Force legal cases that made national headlines, want the Air Force's interpretation of privacy laws re-evaluated in an effort to be similar to the other military services and to be able to respond with the Air Force side of the story before and during courts martial, investigations and other crises to better balance the "right of the people to know," an individual's right to privacy and fair legal proceedings, and the right of the government to administer the military justice system. This should be done by a joint legal/public affairs team, and the results clarified in detailed instructions to the field. With only 30% of public affairs offices having actual plans on how to deal with legal issues, this guidance from headquarters also should include "boilerplate" plans on how to deal with high-visibility legal cases.

There is also a call for improved and more frequent communication between judge advocates and public affairs officers, not only in informal everyday meetings to share information, discuss current events and plan for upcoming legal/public affairs crises, but also at formal meetings, conferences and/or off-sites that will help participants better understand the perspective, objectives and tactics of each other's function.

The commander participation in this relationship is critical, and public affairs officers and judge advocates must ensure the commander is educated on court of law and court of public opinion factors, so that he/she can make the decision about what is best for the Air Force. Both counselors also have a charge to put aside their own parochial interests before offering their counsel and determine what the best legal/public affairs recommendation is for each individual case.

Some respondents, mostly public affairs officers but also some lawyers and commanders, mentioned the rank/experience/credibility disparity between public affairs and legal functions as a factor of conflict. The researcher recommends that the Secretary of the Air Force's public affairs staff research whether the Air Force can do anything

to level the playing field between the two functions. For instance, at the major command and air staff level, where many public affairs officers have the same qualifications in regards to advanced professional education and experience as senior judge advocates, it may be beneficial to have more equity in rank and position. It could be that upgrading the Director and Deputy Director of Public Affairs to two-star and one-star general rank and creating general officer positions at some of the larger major commands would allow for more balance between legal and public affairs counsel and send the proper message to the rest of the service that the two functions are indeed equal.

Research Contributions for Mass Communications

The data from this survey support earlier research done by Fitzpatrick. It shows that, like their civilian counterparts, Air Force public affairs officers lack some knowledge of legal issues. This should send an even stronger signal to communicators that continuing professional education regarding legal topics is needed. The study also shows that, in many conflicts between communicators and lawyers, legal counsel is heeded more by leaders than public relations counsel, often to the detriment of the organization. Using such data that show the importance of balancing legal and public relations objectives in order to win in both a court of law and the court of public opinion, public relations practitioners should continue their efforts to educate lawyers and leaders.

This research also shows the value of gathering information about public relations and the law not only from public relations practitioners, but also from lawyers and leaders as well. As full participants in the relationship, all should offer their opinions of what is good and bad about their interaction, and data from all three are more valuable than data from just one. The researcher agrees with many that improving the status of public relations is important, but not at the expense of the organization as a whole. Whether public relations or the law "wins" in any given situation is not important – what is important is what should be done in that situation to best position the organization to win in both a court of law and the court of public opinion.

There is already evidence that this survey encouraged public affairs officers and lawyers to think about the relationship between public relations and the law. One public affairs officer wrote, "This survey has encouraged me to think about making an appointment for the public affairs office to tour our court, sit in on a hearing and learn more about the UCMJ." And a judge advocate wrote, "You had a great deal to do with my changing attitudes regards this issue." If both can continue a dialogue, improvements in the relationship are likely.

Research Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

There are several limitations to this research. First, many of the findings reflect what happens when Air Force public affairs officers and lawyers are in conflict and how those conflicts are resolved. More than 40% of survey respondents indicated that conflict between the two "never" or "rarely" occurs, and many respondents sent comments indicating that the relationship between the two is favorable. So, it is unknown what the overall effects are on the Air Force when the two are *not* in conflict. Second, although the researcher does feel that how conflict is resolved among public affairs officers and judge advocates is a contributor to how the Air Force fares in courts of law and the court of public opinion, a cause and effect relationship has not been established. Clearly there are other factors that determine the success of the Air Force as an organization. Third, the researcher acknowledges that the "win-lose" framework used to evaluate the relationship between public affairs and legal functions is simplistic and may have been why more than 20% of respondents felt the survey questions regarding conflict resolution were "not applicable." Still, although certainly the relationship between public relations and the law is not always "black and white," the use of the "win-lose" terminology has been used for decades by conflict theorists and is an accepted form of analysis. Finally, the findings only reflect the relationship between public affairs and legal functions in the U.S. Air Force – not any similar relationship in other military service, government department or the civilian sector.

Still, this research could be the foundation for further studies of the relationship between public relations and the law. A similar survey could be given to a cross-section of all types of public relations practitioners, lawyers and organizational leaders – corporate, non-profit, government, etc. The findings from such a survey then could be applied across the board. And, since this study sets a benchmark to describe the relationship between public affairs and legal functions in the Air Force, this survey could be replicated in five or ten years to see if there has been any improvement. If this is done, the researcher recommends surveying the same percentage of judge advocates as public affairs officers and commanders.

Conclusion

While clearly there are other factors besides public affairs and legal that impact whether the Air Force wins or loses in a court of law or the court of public opinion, there is an indication that the service would do well to better balance public affairs and legal counsel. This is not to say that the Air Force will always be able to win in both a

court of law and the court of public opinion. There will be situations when the need for public approval is more important than an individual court case. And, there will be times when public opinion should be sacrificed on the altar of justice. But continued education and communication between public affairs officers, judge advocates and commanders will make for a better relationship, and in turn create a more successful organization.

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Organizations and Public Relations: Institutional Isomorphism

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ABSTRACT

Research on the effects of environmental forces in determining organizational structure and practice has supplied public relations researchers with a theoretical framework. However, previous studies have not shown a strong relationship between types of organizations and public relation practices. This study examines why organizations do not practice public relations very differently. Using the literature of institutionalization of organizational practices, the study develops a theoretical explanation and alternative hypotheses.

Introduction

While a body of public relations studies has concentrated on measuring the effect of communication on public, Grunig is one of the few researchers who suggested a comprehensive theory of public relations combining existing communication theories with organization theories. Grunig's study on the effects of environmental forces and organizational structure in determining public relations practices has supplied public relations research with a theoretical framework (Grunig 1976, 1984). The research stream corresponds with modern organizational theory that posits diverse organizations and seeks to explain variation among organizations in structure and practices (e.g., Hannan and Freeman, 1977).

However, previous studies testing Grunig's theory have not shown a strong relationship between organizational structure and public relations practices (Fabiszak, 1985; McMillan, 1984; E. Pollack, 1984; R. Pollack, 1986; Schneider, 1985a; Schneider, 1985b). With this in mind, this study examines why organizations do not practicing public relations in different ways, as Grunig had expected. The literature on the institutionalization of organizational practices (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Tolbert and Zucker, 1996) provides a point at which to begin exploring an alternative explanation.

Organizational Structure, Environments, and Public Relations Practices

Grunig developed a typology to analyze the relationship between two types of communication methods and two types of organizations. He theorized that organizations practice either informative communication (two-way) or manipulative communication (one-way) in dealing with their publics (Grunig, 1976). Grunig labeled the two types of public relation activities as diachronic and synchronic. He also identified two types of organizations that closely resembled Burns and Stalker's (1961, cited in Grunig, 1976) organic and mechanistic organizational types: problem-solving and fatalistic. Then he hypothesized that a problem-solving organization would practice diachronic public relations while a fatalistic organization, which has a static environment, would practice synchronic public relations.

Yet, Grunig found that the problem-solving organizations practiced more synchronic communication than diachronic communication. In general, relationships between types of organizations and communication types were weak. Thus, in later research, Grunig revised his theory of public relations to include four models rather than two. He also reviewed organization literature that suggested that the dichotomous theory of organizations offered by Burns and Stalker (1961, cited in Gruing, 1976) oversimplified reality. Instead, as Hage and Hull (1981, cited in Schneider, 1985b) proposed, organizations fell into one of four organizational types based on environmental characteristics.

In the newly conceptualized theory, Grunig and Hunt (1984) offered four models of public relations. (1) press agency/publicity (one-way asymmetrical), (2) public

information (one-way symmetrical), (3) two-way asymmetrical, and (4) two-way symmetrical.

Press agency describes propagandistic public relations that seek media attention in almost any way possible. The public information model employs "journalists-in-residence" to provide truthful and accurate information about an organization but not to volunteer negative information. Two-way asymmetrical public relations programs use research to identify the message most likely to produce the support of the public without having to change the behavior of the organization. Two-way symmetrical public relations use bargaining, negotiating, and conflict-resolution strategies to bring symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both the organization and its public. (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, pp.27-42).

Grunig (1984) argued that environmental variables would explain public relations behavior better than the structural variables which his 1976 monograph emphasized (e.g., complexity, formalization, stratification, and centralization). He also suggested that four environmental variables, in particular, seem to explain public relations behavior: scale of demand, knowledge complexity, constraints, and uncertainty. Scale and complexity define the "product/service" environment of an organization, and constraint and uncertainty define the "political/regulatory" environment. Hage and Hull (1981, cited in Schneider, 1985b) argued that scale and complexity can interact and that different combinations of the two variables have different effects. Thus, four types of organizations can be identified using the combination of these two variables: (1) Traditional – low knowledge base and few employees, (2) Mechanistic – large scale and low complexity structure, (3) Organic—

small in scale but high in complexity, and (4) Mixed mechanistic/organic – large scale and high complexity operations.

With the three major concepts, four public relations models, organizational structures, and environmental constraints, some studies have tried to explore relationships among them, asking how organizational structure and environment influence public relations practices. The basic notion is the contingency theory of organizations, which explains organizational structures as efficient responses to environmental constraints related to task performance. The public relations studies emerging from the structural-functional approach, which focuses on how organizations design their internal structure and practices, is contingent on the environment (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

Previous studies, however, have failed to support many hypotheses regarding the relationship between public relations practices and an organization's environment and structures (E. Pollack, 1984; McMillan, 1984; Rabiszak, 1985; R. Pollack, 1986; Schneider, 1985a; Schneider, 1985b). McMillan's study (1984), one of the first tests of the four models of public relations as well as the Hage-Hull typology, examined the effect of organizational structure on the practice of public relations in trade and professional associations. The research found that structural variables had little significant relationship to the models of public relations practiced.

E. Pollack (1984) in a study of federal government agencies found that the variables that have a significant impact on public relations behavior are the amount of formal public relations education the staff has had, the extent to which top administrators support the public relations function, and the extent to which these top administrators understand the role of the public relations department. However, the study did not show

much correlation between the public relations models, organizational structure and environmental variables.

The study by Fabiszak (1985) found that a profile of the public relations practices of the nation's hospitals is characterized largely by press agency methods, and while a hospital's environment may have some effect on the practice of its public relations, its influence is not strong. Fabiszak concluded that the Grunig theory is inadequate in predicting the practice of public relations in organizations but added that the Grunig theory does have merit as a normative theory.

In a study of 500 scientific organizations, R. Pollack (1986) found that the organizations practiced predominantly the public information model of public relations, although they use the other models of communication behavior frequently. However, they do not seem to be practicing the model that Grunig's theory stated is most likely to put them in equilibrium with their environment. Some significant findings were reported. Support of the public relations department by the dominant coalition and representation of the department in the inner circle of power influence the communication behavior of the organization. In addition, whether the dominant coalition favors the scientists' view of releasing information (knowledge of science) or the public's need to know (knowledge about science) affects the public relation activities.

Schneider (1985a, 1985b) also reported that her finding provided limited support for the hypotheses regarding the relationship between four models of public relations and Hage-Hull's four types of organizations.

Institutional Theory and Public Relations Practices

The institutional approach to the study of organizations has produced considerable interest and research in recent years. Institutional analysis of organizations began with a paper by Meyer and Rowan (1977). The paper broke away from prevailing contingency theories of organizations, which explained organizational structures as efficient responses to environmental constraints in relation to task performance (Strang, 1994). A major argument in institutional theory poses the question: "What makes organizations so similar?" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) instead of "Why are there so many kinds of organizations?" (Hannan & Freeman, 1977).

Institutionalization refers to the processes by which societal expectations of appropriate organizational form and behavior come to take on rule-like status in social thought and action. These expectations, in turn, gain wide acceptance, are adopted by the individual organization and help legitimize its existence (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Tolbert and Zucker, 1996).

Early adopters of organizational innovation are strongly driven to improve performance. As an innovation spreads, a threshold is reached beyond which adoption provides legitimacy rather than improves performance (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In a study of adoption of civil-service reform, Tolbert and Zucker (1983) found that early adopters were strongly related to a city's characteristics but later adopters were not related to them. Such evidence was found in the field of public relations. According to Broom (1986), public relations departments were first organized in response to an environmental threat, but soon followers began establishing departments out of a desire or preference to have one (Dozier & Ehling, 1992). Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 115) also

observed that top managers "just assumed their organizations needed a public relations department," as other organizations did, and "seldom asked why."

The applicability of institutional theory is suggested by a variety of forces at work in the inter-organizational field in which public relations practices are determined.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) sought to understand three processes -- coercive, mimetic and normative -- underlying a tendency for organizations to become isomorphic in organizational structure and practices.

The coercive isomorphism involves pressures that external constituents exert on organizations to adopt certain practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The legal environment is one major force in this category. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) pointed out how organizations faced with unruly interdependence seek to use the greater power of the larger social system to ensure eligibility for the receipt of federal contracts and funds. Meyer and Rowen (1977) argued that as organizations expand their dominance over more arenas of social life, organizational structures are likely to reflect rules institutionalized and legitimized by the state.

For example, the explosive growth of political action committees (PAC) was documented. Since 1974, when corporations were allowed to establish PACs, their numbers have risen from 440 corporate and trade association PACs to 1,750 in 1980 (Mahon, 1982, p. 100). Direct imposition of standard operating procedures occurs in the relationship between parent corporation and subsidiaries. Subsidiaries must adopt various practices that are compatible with the parent company (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 151).

Hypothesis 1: There will be a high degree of similarity in public relations practices between parent corporations (federal government) and their subsidiaries (local government agencies).

Mimetic isomorphism involves the imitation of widely used organizational practices. As Aldrich (1979, p.265) has argued, "the major factors that organizations must take into account are other organizations." "Doing what others do, so as to be 'in' is a generic form of social behavior" (Han, 1994, p.147). The advantages of mimetic behavior are considerable when an organization is faced with ambiguous environments or uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic isomorphism has been empirically tested. A dynamic of imitation among client firms produces the high level of isomorphism observable in their auditor selection (Han, 1994). The interlocking directorship of corporations provides a mechanism for the diffusion of organizational practices on corporate acquisition activities (Haunschild 1993).

Mimetic behavior was observed in newspaper organizations. Major or elite news organizations such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* also influence the play of topics on the news agenda (McCombs and Bell, 1996). Reese and Danielian (1989) found that the *Times* took the lead in placing a cocaine story on the press's agenda. This intermedia influence can be found both among news organizations and individual newswriters. Since journalists constantly cover an ambiguous social world, they rely heavily on each other for ideas and confirmation of their news judgments. In that sense, uncertainty is a powerful force that encourages imitation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Editors tend to question coverage that differs from other news sources, so journalists seek consistency and conformity in their reporting of events. This phenomenon, known as "pack journalism," was most notably observed during the 1972 presidential campaign. Crouse (1973, p.84) wrote: "What happened was that Johnny Apple of the *New York*

Times sat in a corner and everyone peered over his shoulder to find out what he was writing."

Mahon's (1982) survey results showed some evidence of mimetic behavior. More than half of public affairs units in existence in the 1980s were created in the 1970s, and nearly one-third during 1977-1980. These data demonstrate the newness of the function on the U.S. corporate scene. Additionally, community relations practices in business firms seem to be a logical response to social forces in the late 1960s. At that time riots and civil disturbances took place in several cities around the country, and many companies rushed to create departments of urban or community affairs to respond to these problems. Many of these organizational units have incorporated into public affairs or public relations departments. The corporations that established public affairs departments during the late 1970s seem to have been influenced not by immediate social turbulence but by an uncertain environment and major competitors' actions (Mahon, 1982).

"*Modeling*" is a mechanism of mimetic behavior. "It merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organization may use. Models may be diffused unintentionally, indirectly through employee transfer or turnover, or explicitly by organizations such as consulting firms or industry trade associations" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mahon's (1982, p.91) survey data showed that approximately 90% of public affairs department personnel came from outside the firm. Of the public relations practitioners surveyed, 43 percent said they were reporters before becoming public relations practitioners (Dozier, 1990).

The normative isomorphism involves the professionalization of the key workplace members who aspire to define the conditions and methods of their work so as to establish

a common philosophy and legitimacy for their professional autonomy. Professionalism refers to the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control "the production of producers" (Larson, 1977, pp.49-52), and to establish legitimacy for their occupational autonomy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Two aspects of professionalization are major sources of normative isomorphism: formal education and professional networking. University or professional training institutions are basic outlets for the creation and development of organizational norms. Professional and trade associations are another outlet for the promulgation of normative rules about organizational and professional behavior. "Professions are subject to the same coercive and mimetic pressures as are organizations. Moreover, while various kinds of professions within an organization may differ from one another, they exhibit much similarity to their professional counterparts in other organizations" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p.152). Those institutions create a mechanism in which individuals who take similar positions across a range of organizations possess a similarity of orientation and disposition. This similar outlook may override variations in tradition and control that might otherwise shape organizational behavior (Perrow, 1974).

In that sense, the similarity of public relations practices and dominant practices of public relations (one-way public relations models) among organizations can be explained by public relations education programs in universities. University-level education in public relations dates from 1920. However, programs then were part-time and focused mainly on publicity, a kind of propaganda model (Culip, 1961). In 1956, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) made the first comprehensive survey of public relations

education and found that the number of colleges offering courses had tripled in a decade (Nelson, 1956). Another survey in 1970 identified increased scholarly research. At the time, 303 institutions offered one or more courses in public relations (Hiebert, 1970). The 1981 Commission on Public Relations Education estimated that 10,000 students were taking public relations courses at some 300 institutions (Smith, 1982). In 1987, a similar commission found more than 160 colleges and universities offering public relations sequences or degree programs associated with journalism schools and departments (Ehling and Plank, 1987). Approximately 40 percent of public relations practitioners majored in journalism and around 30 percent of International Association of Business Communication members worked for newspapers, magazines, radio stations or television stations before being hired in public relations (Cultip, Center, and Broom, 1994, pp.29-30). In terms of the above statistics, the most important factor is that most public relations programs are in journalism schools. Even though public relations textbooks add a managerial public relations role like the two-way public relations model, the basic curriculum of public relations programs in journalism schools have limitations. Some critics argue that public relations suffers by its affiliation with schools of journalism (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p.78).

The above statistical evidence support DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) theoretical explanation: "The greater the reliance on academic credentials in choosing managerial and staff personnel, the greater the extent to which an organization will become more like others in its field. Applicants with academic credentials have already undergone a socialization process in university programs, and are thus more likely than others to have internalized reigning norms and dominant organizational models"(p.155).

One important mechanism for encouraging normative isomorphism is through the hiring of individuals from organizations within the same industry. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call the process "filtering." Along with public relations education in universities, professional organizations or professional networks are the other forces to make organizations isomorphic. The exchange of information among members helps contribute to common knowledge. Meyer and Rowan (1977) also point out that the more elaborate the relational networks among organizations and their members, the greater the collective organizational of the environment.

Hypothesis 2: Public relations practices in organizations are more likely to be similar in the same industry.

Hypothesis 3: Public relations practices among organizations are more likely to be similar when there is a good deal of movement between organizations by public relations managers.

Hypothesis 4: The greater the participation of public relations managers in PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) or IABC (International Association of Business Communication), the more likely public relations practices will become like other organizations' practices in its field.

Discussion

Through this paper, institutional theory was applied to public relations, asking why organizations practice public relations in similar ways. By highlighting the role of normative influences in organizational decision-making processes, institutional theory offers a distinctive approach to explaining organizational structure and practices. Institutional theory, however, is faced with the criticism that it ignores rationality (or bounded rationality) (Williamson, 1981) which is a staple component of organizational research. In the theory, oversocialized individuals are assumed to accept social norms

without any real behavioral resistance even when the norms conflict with their own interests. DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p.153) point out that "each of the institutional isomorphic process can be expected to proceed in the absence of evidence that they increase internal organizational efficiency." In that sense, institutional theory seems to explain how rationality is bounded.

The power-control perspective (Robinson, 1987) suggests a bounded rationality and a weak relationship between environments and organizational structure. The power-control perspective argues that dominant coalitions do not seek structures that match environmental conditions to optimize organizational goals. Because overall organizational goals and the goals of individual members of the dominant coalition are infrequently the same, decisions are inherently nonrational and are sensitive to the size and domain of internal subunits. Decision-making does not optimize but satisfies organizational effectiveness. Outcomes are not optimal, only good enough (Robinson, 1987, p.178). As mentioned before, R. Pollack's study (1986) showed that the dominant coalition influenced public relations practices. The power-control perspective could be an alternative explanation of why Grunig's theory has not been empirically supported. The power perspective suggests an explanation of why organizations' public relations departments function differently under similar circumstances -- that is, when their structure and environments are similar -- or similarly even though their circumstances are different and their structures and environments are different.

Why do/can all four models of public relations coexist in an organization? Are the developed public relations models, such as two-way public relations, competence-destroying or competence-enhancing? Even though these concepts are usually used in the

technological-innovation literature, the basic idea might be applied to public relations practices as well. In a broader sense, technology might be knowledge and methods that endow capabilities to agents in a field for establishing and maintaining their transactions (Leblebici, Salancik, and King, 1991).

Competence-destroying discontinuities refer to fundamental differences from previously dominant technologies such that the skills and knowledge base required to operate the core technology shift. A competence-enhancing discontinuity refers to order-of-magnitude improvement in performance that builds on existing know-how (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Two-way public relations models are likely to be competence-enhancing because two-way models don't make publicity/public information models obsolete.

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Running Head: 'Implied Third-Party Endorsement' Effect

**No, Virginia, It's Not True What They Say About
Publicity's 'Implied Third-Party Endorsement' Effect**

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No, Virginia, It's Not True What They Say About

Publicity's 'Implied Third-Party Endorsement' Effect

Abstract: This review essay examines "implied third-party endorsement" as an explanation of publicity effectiveness. In lieu of the traditional explanation that publicity's superiority can be attributed an *implied* recommendation found in media content, the author argues that any effect is actually an *inferred* endorsement by the audience. The author argues that effects commonly attributed to third-party endorsement actually stem from biased audience processing that favors news and disfavors advertising. This article reviews relevant research, including 11 experiments, which provide only qualified support for claims about the superiority of news. Original findings from an assessment of audience perceptions provide support for the notion of biased processing and suggest that presentation of information as news is not necessarily perceived as an endorsement of a topic by news workers. Implications for future research about publicity are discussed.

For more than a half century, public relations practitioners have ascribed the superiority of news over advertising to an *implied third-party endorsement* by the media.¹ Rotman sums up the idea by explaining that whenever information appears as news in the editorial portions of the media, "there is an implied endorsement by the editor who, you [audience members] feel sure, would not allow anything unverified or incomplete to occupy editorial space or time in the media."² Roman and Mass contend that obtaining such an endorsement is the very essence of publicity work.³ Ryan and Lemmond state that third party endorsement makes audiences more receptive while "enveloping the commercial in a credible environment."⁴ Blyskal and Blyskal explain:

Theoretically, anything appearing in the press has been carefully scrutinized by an already skeptical eye. And anything judged positive by the adversarial--and sometimes savage--press has passed a special endurance test, a gauntlet of sorts. It must be superior.⁵

Despite widespread acceptance among practitioners,⁶ little empirical research has been conducted to test claims about third-party endorsements, or the superiority of news versus advertising more generally. In 1974, Detwiler observed, "After about 50 years of currency in public relations, the concept of third-party endorsement is still *terra incognita*. It is devoid of research support and devoid of literature. This keystone of public relations is still for the most

part an article of faith...."⁷ Hunt and Grunig also are wary: "We know of little research evidence that people actually believe journalists have endorsed a product when they run a news story or that editorial copy has greater credibility than advertising copy. ... the evidence is so scanty that we recommend caution in assuming and claiming third-party effects."⁸

This review essay examines the notion of implied third-party endorsement as a major tenet of public relations practice. It attempts to clarify the concept by suggesting a more theoretically based explanation that addresses some of the conceptual problems inherent in the traditional definition. It also proffers a comprehensive review of the social scientific literature related to publicity effectiveness in order to put claims about third-party endorsement into perspective. Finally, it presents original findings that shed doubt on the notion that mere exposure in the media is tantamount to an endorsement.

'IMPLIED THIRD-PARTY ENDORSEMENT' EFFECTS

The Traditional Perspective

The notion that media provide an *endorsement* to topics they cover is rooted in early theories about the roles media play in society, in particular the ability of media to create *awareness* and to *confer status*. The media's ability to establish personal and public agendas is well established; the agenda-setting metaphor suggests that media influence public opinion by telling people what to think *about*--not necessarily what to think.⁹ The *status conferral* function suggests that media extend *legitimacy* to a topic. In 1948, Lazarsfeld and Merton observed:

Recognition by the press ... testifies that one has arrived, that one is important enough to have been singled out from the large anonymous masses, that one's behavior and opinions are significant enough to require public notice.¹⁰

More recently, Oskamp stressed the power of the media to confer prestige and noted that press coverage can invest obscure nonentities with importance out of proportion to their status in life, and so audiences pay attention to their ideas.¹¹ Alcalay and Taplin explain public relations "has a high degree of 'third-party' credibility because it is attributed to a nonbiased 'news' source."¹² Habermas focuses on this legitimization notion by suggesting that publicity "bestows on its object the authority of an object of public interest."¹³

Endorsement Defined. Webster suggests that to *endorse* a product, person or cause is "to express approval of publicly and definitely."¹⁴ Thus an endorsement is different from recommendation. To *recommend* means "to present as worthy of acceptance or trial"¹⁵ Although the terms often are used interchangeably, endorsement involves an indication of approval, not necessarily a call to action.

At minimum, an endorsement involves three components: two actors, A and B, in a communication dyad in which A indicates to B approval of object X: A-X→ B. A third-party

endorsement involves the introduction of a third actor, C. This third actor can serve either in a *moderating* role to influence the impact of communication between actors A and B (such as when B asks C about X), or can serve in a *mediating* role when communications flow from A through C to B: $A-X \rightarrow C-X \rightarrow B$.

The impact of third parties on communication processes has received extensive attention in the interpersonal communication literature¹⁶ and has proven to be a valuable technique in persuasion. Katz and Lazarsfeld suggested "failure of influentials to endorse an idea" can be an obstacle to diffusion processes.¹⁷ Marketers have examined the impact of third parties in relationship to the use of celebrity endorsements,¹⁸ recommendations of products by organizations or experts,¹⁹ the role of influential intermediates (such as sales representatives) in marketing channels,²⁰ and the effectiveness of affinity group marketing programs.²¹ Common to all of these uses of the term are four key ideas: The endorsement comes from a) an outside party, b) who is familiar to the audience, c) who ostensibly enjoys a high level of trust, and d) whose endorsement provides an intangible value-added.

--Figure 1 about here--

Endorsements Involving Publicity. Figure 1 compares various kinds of third-party endorsements and suggests implied third-party endorsements by media differ from other types of endorsements several ways. First, third-party endorsement in the context of publicity always involves *mediated* forms of communication, i.e. messages that appear in newspapers, magazines, radio and television. Second, such endorsements involve *no compensation*, i.e. message sponsors do not pay to have messages appear and do not compensate media workers directly to make endorsements. Third, and most importantly, publicity endorsements are *implicit*, i.e. no explicit recommendation or call to action is required: the *mere presence* of an unpaid message in the media is considered sufficient for implied third-party endorsement to occur.

Conceptual Issues. Several problems plague the traditional explanation of third-party endorsement. The first problem is the often stated claim that news workers, consciously or unconsciously, make news selections with the *intent* of endorsing particular topics as being important or otherwise worthy of audience attention.²² In fact, news selection is a complex process that reflects various factors: the conventions and routines of news work, audience demands and interests, pressures from sources, organizational policies and cultures, adequacy of staffing, and the availability of news material. What's more, the argument that news workers purposefully endorse particular ideas runs counter to professional journalistic standards that emphasize objectivity and impartiality.²³

Second, beyond agenda-setting, there is only very limited evidence that even *explicit* endorsements in the news portions of the media have an effect on behavior. In the political arena, for example, studies generally have found only modest effects for editorial page endorsements. Generally, editorial page endorsements have been shown to be most effective in situations where voters, especially independents, were undecided or had few sources of information or when the newspaper's stance was contrary to its prior endorsements.²⁴ In the

marketing arena, only scattered studies have attempted to examine the effects of editorial content in buying decisions. Most behavioral research has been focused on the influence of quality ratings²⁵ or consumers' reliance upon publications such as *Consumer Reports*²⁶ that contain explicit recommendations. Other research has examined the use of news and editorial matter as a source in information search²⁷ and the contextual influence of editorial matter on the processing of advertising.²⁸ However, the findings are fragmentary at best.

Redefining 'Third Party Endorsement' from an Audience Processing Perspective

The traditional explanation discussed above suggests that implied editorial endorsements are characteristics inherent in messages found in newspapers, magazines, radio or television and are the result of actions by media workers. An alternative approach suggests that endorsements are not *implied* by media workers at all, but rather are *inferred* by media audiences. This conceptualization avoids the conceptual problems related to the intent of media, and shifts the focus of analysis to how audiences process information presented as news. Such an approach is consistent with research that examines concepts such as credibility and media bias from audience perspectives.²⁹

Elsewhere the author has suggested that audiences use the *content class* in which information appears as a contextual cue that biases the processing of mediated messages.³⁰ During the pre-attention phases of processing messages, audiences are hypothesized to categorize messages into familiar content classes and to invoke different rules for processing, or cognitive schemas, which are deemed appropriate in a given situation.³¹ Anderson and Meyer suggest that each of the three major types of media content operate through different rules or contracts with the audience. Under the *reality contract* for news and information, audiences assume the content is both important and real. Under the *advertising contract*, content is understood to be persuasive in its intent. Under the *entertainment contract*, audiences suspend belief because they understand the content is fantasy.³² Under this scenario, the presentation of information in the form of news (versus advertising or entertainment) serves as a *source cue* wherein audience knowledge about news (or other content classes), is taken into account in the processing of messages.

When examined from this audience-based perspective, the effects commonly attributed to third-party endorsements by media can be explained in terms of biased processing that can be measured in the cognitive, attitudinal and conative responses elicited by the message within audiences. A critical question remaining, however, is whether any advantage enjoyed by publicity is a function of characteristics inherent in news. Or, is publicity's advantage equally rooted in the *less desirable* characteristics associated with other content classes, such as advertising? Indeed, strong evidence suggests the relative advantage enjoyed by news can be attributed to *both* processing bias that favors news as well as processing bias that disfavors advertising.

Bias Favoring News. Studies dating back to the classic Yale Studies in the late 1940s and

1950s have identified news media as credible sources of information.³³ In general, these same studies have found that high-credibility sources are more effective in persuasion than low credibility sources, although various exceptions can be cited.³⁴ Claims about the greater credence of news messages has been acknowledged by social scientists dating back to at least 1948, when Doob observed that promoters of various sorts utilize publicity rather than advertising because audiences are in a "more receptive mood" and because the "propagandee feels he is reading or listening to an objective version of the truth."³⁵ More recently, McGuire observed "favorable material introduced as 'news' by a public relations expert is more influential than advertisements clearly labeled as such."³⁶ Schudson similarly wrote, "if an item appears as news, it has a legitimacy that advertising does not have. Consumers discount or discredit advertising, to some extent, because they know it to be from an interested source. A news story is not so easily discounted."³⁷ Pfau and Parrott state "Mass media news coverage of campaigns provides credibility and thus is an invaluable asset."³⁸

A review of the literature suggests four key characteristics that might make news particularly acceptable to audiences as a source of information:

☐ *Expertness* is one of the traditional components of credibility.³⁹ Reeves, Chaffee and Tims observed "an understandable tendency to place more faith in information from media, which are professionally organized to validate and edit their content...."⁴⁰

☐ *Independence* is the absence of a vested interest or the prospect of organizational or personal gain from a particular news story carried by the media. Independence is a necessary condition for trustworthiness, the other major component (along with expertness) that comprises credibility.⁴¹ However, it is becoming increasingly to claim media independence is tantamount to trustworthiness in light of the continued complaints about media performance and bias today.⁴²

☐ *Unclear intention to persuade.* Because the perceived purpose of news is to *tell*, not *sell*, audiences are considered to be open to a greater variety of messages presented as news. News, unlike advertising, usually lacks *forewarning* about persuasive intent. Indicators of forewarning have been demonstrated to reduce persuasive effects.⁴³ Lesly noted, "The techniques of the effective public relations [practitioner] are especially selected and used to impact ideas so that the recipient comes to feel they are [his or her] own."⁴⁴

☐ *Ambiguity of language.* News practices that stress balanced reporting, the lack of effusive language, and the matter-of-fact way in news is delivered makes it similarly difficult for sources to discern persuasion attempts in news. Correspondence theory suggests that such ambiguity might actually increase attention.⁴⁵ Harlow advised public relations practitioners that "in most situations indirect content and an indirect approach tend to win more acceptance and support for an idea or cause than a hard-hitting content and direct-attack approach."⁴⁶

Significantly, when researchers and practitioners make claims about third-party endorsement effects, they do so with similar statements about the superiority of news over

advertising. Writers refer to the greater *believability* of news,⁴⁷ the *motivating* nature of news,⁴⁸ the greater *attention* paid to the message⁴⁹ and perceived *objectivity* that operates in tandem with the potentially *longer length* of news stories.⁵⁰

Bias Disfavoring Advertising. Consumer dislike of advertising has been recognized for nearly a century. One of the earliest trade books in public relations explained in 1921 that publicity "disseminates a general idea, opinion or point of view, which, if labelled as advertising, would lose much of its effect."⁵¹ More recently, Levitt observed, "If advertising's very abundance creates a high coefficient of agnosticism, then public relations has a special claim to merit. Its distinction is the greater credibility of its message."⁵²

Advertising distrust has been cited as a problem by advertising researchers⁵³ and professionals,⁵⁴ and has been corroborated by polls.⁵⁵ The phenomena can be viewed within the larger context of *consumer resistance*.⁵⁶ Efforts to understand why certain ads are accepted more or less than others have focused on the purpose,⁵⁷ sponsors,⁵⁸ and types of claims made in ads.⁵⁹

Overall, explanations of the unfavorable response to advertising by audiences fall into three broad categories:

□ *Avoidance.* Drawing upon cognitive balance and cognitive dissonance theories, some theorists emphasize that people wish to maintain cognitive equilibrium and avoid discrepant information in their daily lives. Advertising often involves the encouragement of behaviors that people consider undesirable. Thus, audiences are believed to avoid potentially dissonant information by skipping over ads in print media, leaving the room during commercials, or otherwise "tuning out" advertising.⁶⁰

□ *Resistance.* Other arguments suggest that audiences *react negatively* to advertising messages. Psychological reactance theory contends that individuals will resist messages or actions whenever personal freedom is threatened.⁶¹ Cognitive response theory suggests that positive elaboration of message (the self-generation of support arguments and source bolstering) are necessary conditions for persuasion to occur.⁶² By contrast, consumers often respond to advertising messages with counter-arguments and source derogations.⁶³

□ *Discounting.* Finally, attribution theory-based explanations suggest that people purposefully dismiss advertising as an effort to influence them, and thus they are less likely to consider the arguments presented in the message. Kelley's general *discounting principle* suggested that when individuals are presented with two causal explanations for why an event occurs, they will tend to disbelieve the most obvious explanation in favor of others. Attribution-based theories quickly were adopted to explain advertising distrust.⁶⁴

REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON PUBLICITY VERSUS ADVERTISING

If news outperforms advertising as a result of implied third-party endorsements, valuable insights can be gleaned from examining the research conducted to date on the comparative effectiveness of these formats for presenting promotional messages. This question has been the subject of sporadic interest during the past three decades. Significantly, while studies generally support the strength of news (publicity), little support can be found for the notion that news is uniformly better than advertising.

Studies Involving General Comparisons

Ability to Distinguish. No empirical studies have focused solely on whether audiences are able to differentiate between advertisements and publicity. The lack of research in this arena reflects, in part, the assumption that the difference is obvious. Levitt cites one early study that he says concluded that "deep down inside the consumer understands ... that an advertisement is an ad, not a factual news story."⁶⁵ Larkin dismisses the question as being irrelevant because he argues that the advertising and news (which together are mediated sources) are indistinguishable as sources of information when compared to interpersonal sources.⁶⁶ Research concerned with the vulnerability of children to advertising suggests that awareness and knowledge of differences in the purpose and intent of different classes of media content are learned through experience. Whereas children as old as the fourth grade are unable to discern the purpose of advertising from entertainment, most children develop a distrust of advertising by the time they reach ages 9-12.⁶⁷

Differences in Cognitive Processing. McLeod, Pan and Rucinski suggest that audiences do not process news and advertising in the same way. Based on a 1987 telephone survey intended to study media use, the researchers detected patterns of processing for advertising that differed significantly from the news information processing strategies that McLeod and his colleagues had validated in earlier research.⁶⁸ Respondents were less likely to recall and later think about and talk about ads they said they had seen, less likely to attempt to interpret their meaning (i.e. "read between the lines" for deeper understanding of the message), and less likely to engage in the same form of selective scanning the researchers had detected for news. Moreover, attention to ads was negatively related to recall of news content, leading the researchers to conclude that different groups are likely to scan and integrate news versus advertising. They concluded that news processing strategies are not necessarily applicable to advertising [and presumably entertainment programming], and suggested that research ought to focus on content-specific strategies.⁶⁹

Comprehension. Jacoby and Hoyer compared rates of miscomprehension of TV messages and found non-advertising messages (TV programs and news) were misunderstood more than advertising messages. While the researchers described the results as statistically significant but "practically trivial," the findings suggest possible differences in effects and in the manners of processing.⁷⁰ Preston and Scharbach examined the ability of individuals to discern logically invalid statements in 12 advertisements versus the same message reconstructed in the forms of news stories, business memoranda and letters. They found that advertisements were significantly higher in acceptance of logically invalid statements than any of the other forms and that

individuals were least likely to describe as accurate an illogical statement when presented as a news story. The authors explained, "The communication form most clearly different from advertising in this way would be news stories, which are generally seen as imparting information and not calling for a response." They concluded that individuals often impute information not a part of advertising's manifest content. Importantly, the researchers suggested, "The reader of other [non-advertising] message forms does not perceive the source as being necessarily partial to the outcome; therefore [he or she] does not tend so strongly to see the message as making positive claims"⁷¹

Experimental Research Comparing Effectiveness of News v. Advertising

Eleven published studies report experimental findings comparing the effectiveness of news versus advertising. Figure 2 provides a summary of these studies, which were conducted in the United States, Canada and Germany, and involved 1,557 subjects, mostly college students.

--Figure 2 about here--

Overall, the studies are consistent in demonstrating the strength of news. Among the eleven studies, however, only two support the third-party endorsement notion, three are difficult to interpret because of potential confounds in manipulations or measurements, and six studies produced only qualified support for claims about the superiority of news, i.e. these studies suggested that advertising performed equally well with news under certain conditions. Significantly, no study found advertising outperformed news. A useful way to synthesize the results of these studies involves differentiating between cognitive, attitudinal and conative effects that were examined in these studies.

Cognitive effects involve whether news leads to more thorough learning of information, as measured in higher levels of recall and message elaboration. Such a conclusion would be the expected if audiences pay attention to news messages more than advertising. Anderson and Abbott,⁷² Salmon, Reid, Pokrysznski and Willett,⁷³ and Cameron⁷⁴ all found evidence that news or news-like presentations outperformed advertising on measures related to extensiveness of processing. However, d'Astous and Hébert⁷⁵ found support for high levels of recall for only one of two products in their study. Hallahan⁷⁶ found no main effects for either recall or the number of cognitive thoughts generated. However, content class interacted with product involvement. Reading about high involvement products in the form of news led to lower recall and cognitive response scores, possibly because readers felt confident and saw no need to process the information more thoroughly. However, for low involvement products, the presentation of the same information as news prompted readers to process information more thoroughly than the same advertising message, represented in statistically higher recall and more cognitive responses generated. Advertising had no such moderating effect; the scores for recall and cognitive responses hovered in between within a very narrow range, suggesting readers might have shut down processing of those messages, summarily dismissing them as advertising.

Attitudinal Effects. Of the seven studies that examined attitudinal assessments of neither the message or the subject matter of the message, one early study (Anderson and Abbott) found unqualified support for news, i.e. that an infomercial generated more positive attitudes than a commercial for a bacon product. The other studies detected significant interactions that suggested other factors moderated any such effect

Sources/Spokesperson Interactions. Two studies found that news enhanced assessments of a spokesperson in certain, but not all, situations. Salmon et al. found that an advocacy message from the American Cancer Society was perceived as less biased in a news format, but such was not the case for a story featuring a commercial product (Pepsi). Straughan, Bleske and Zhao⁷⁷ found that the appearance of commercial spokesperson (a pharmaceutical company president) in the news had indirect effects on attitudes because the news was believed to be more credible and because the CEO was perceived as more interesting and persuasive. Such was not the case, however, for a noncommercial spokesman (a mental health association executive).

Involvement, Attitude and Knowledge Interactions. Four studies that manipulated levels of involvement found that the influence of news versus advertising is moderated by the degree of personal relevance and familiarity with the topic. Anderson and Abbott (despite a possible manipulation confound), found support for Petty and Cacioppo's elaboration likelihood model (ELM),⁷⁸ which suggests that source credibility effects only apply to individuals for which a topic has low personal relevance. Chaiken and Maheswaran⁷⁹ detected similar results that are consistent with Chaiken's heuristic-systematic model, which closely parallels the ELM in arguing that high involvement individuals disregard source credibility (such as whether a message appears in news or ads). Hausknecht, Wilkinson and Prough⁸⁰ found that messages for a diet pill were judged more truthful and believable when presented as news, but only by individuals with poor product knowledge. Individuals with positive prior attitudes toward diet pills judged messages equally whether presented in ads or advertorial formats. Finally, Chew, Slater and Kelly⁸¹ found that message type (news versus advertising) interacted with both product involvement (a motivational factor) and brand familiarity (a cognitive knowledge or ability factor) to affect assessments of credibility, a specific type of attitudinal measure.

Argument Quality Interactions. Three of the studies also found that content class also interacted with argument quality, i.e. the messages were manipulated to be either strong or weak, or ambiguous or unambiguous. Anderson and Abbott's ELM-based study found that strong arguments were necessary in news for individuals with high involvement in a topic, while individuals with low involvement disregarded argument strength. Chaiken and Maheswaran found in conditions of high involvement, argument quality was significant, but that the presentation of information as news increased the *confidence* levels of subjects when the message contained a high level of ambiguity. Finally, Hallahan found no significant difference between news and advertising messages presented with strong messages, or with news when the message was presented with comparatively weaker messages. However, argument quality interacted with content class in the case of weak messages presented as advertising and led to significantly lower assessments of believability, attitude toward the message and attitude toward the brand. The findings suggest the importance of the presence of strong arguments in advertising, consistent

with audience expectations.

Conative measures. Of the six studies that measured behavior intent, i.e. respondents' self-reported statement about the probability that they would engage in a particular action related to the message, such as purchasing the product featured, only one study by Schwarz, Kumpf & Bussman⁸² found unqualified support in favor of news. One other study (Chew, Slater & Kelly) found no main effects on purchase intent, i.e. purchase intent levels were the same for news and advertising. The other studies found that behavioral intent largely coincided with attitudinal assessments, with the same kinds of interactions reported based upon featured spokesperson (Straughan, Blesko and Zhao), level of involvement (Chaiken & Maheswaran), product type (d'Astous and Hébert), product attitude (Hausknecht, Wilkinson and Prough), and argument quality (Chaiken and Maheswaran, Hallahan). In one study (Salmon et al.) audiences found ad messages to be more interesting and informative, and thus more persuasive in terms of behavioral intent.

ASSESSMENT OF AUDIENCE PERCEPTIONS

While the eleven experiments summarized above reported statistically significant and theoretically important findings, only the Hallahan study attempted to examine the underlying processes by asking respondents about their perceptions of news versus advertising and about their reactions to the claims put forth by practitioners and others in support of third-party endorsement arguments. Those results are reported here for the first time.

Method. Near the conclusion of the Hallahan study, the 329 subjects first were asked to complete a eight-item semantic differential scale for each of two concepts: *News in General* and *Advertising in General*. The eight items were composed of bipolar antonymal pairs, which were randomly reversed in direction. Subjects were asked to indicate their perceptions of these concepts for each antonymal pair on a seven-point scale. The paired items included: *informative/not informative*, *useful/not useful*, *interesting/not interesting*, *relevant/not relevant*, *believable/not believable*, *involving/not involving*, *accurate/inaccurate*, and *trustworthy/untrustworthy*.

Participants also were asked to respond to a series of statements about contemporary media practices that focused on specific aspects of claims made about the effectiveness of news vis-à-vis advertising. Participants could agree or disagree with each of the 15 statements using a 7-point Likert-type scale in which 7=strongly agree and 1=strongly disagree. Statements were randomly varied in valence; thus low scores on negatively stated items actually reflected agreement.

--Table 1 about here--

--Figure 3 about here--

Perceived Differences Between News and Advertising. Table 1 represents the results of the semantic differential scale comparison and shows that respondents uniformly rated news more favorably than advertising (paired t-tests, all $p \leq .001$). When an index combining the scores on the eight items was computed for each content class (Cronbach alpha = .87 for news and alpha = .86 for advertising), the mean score was 5.65 for news, compared to 4.64 for advertising (paired t-test: $t_{328} = -18.11$, $p \leq .001$). While the overall difference scores are important, the more interesting results emerged from comparing the size of the differences across items. When factor analyses (varimax rotations) were conducted on the separate scales for news and advertising, two separate but parallel factors emerged for each scale. These included a *credibility* factor that included *trustworthy*, *believable* and *accurate* (Eigenvalue = 4.31 for news, accounting for 53.9% of variance; Eigenvalue = 4.14 for advertising, accounting for 51.8% of variance). The second smaller factor was labelled the *utility* factor and included *relevant*, *useful*, *informative*, *involving*, and *interesting* (Eigenvalue = 1.01 for news, accounting for 12.7% of variance; Eigenvalue = 1.05 for advertising, accounting for 13.6% of variance). The results from Table 1 are plotted in Figure 3, and suggest that the biggest differences between news and advertising can be seen among the items that loaded on the credibility factor. In particular, respondents indicated a large gulf in *trustworthiness* between news and advertising. Although still statistically significant, the differences were smaller overall for the utility items. These results suggest that these two content classes elicit sharp differences in how they are perceived.

--Table 2 about here--

Perceptions About Publicity and Advertising Practices. Table 2 shows the results of the 15 media practices statements, grouped into five categories based upon a factor analysis of the items. One factor loaded with statements related to *use and preference*. The other four groups, as intended, correspond to the four distinguishing characteristics of news presented earlier. These factors deal with *trustworthiness*, *intent to persuade*, *ambiguity/forewarning* and *expertise*.

Overall, the findings suggest respondents discern clear differences between news and advertising. While some of the premises underlying the implied third-party endorsement concept are supported, the data suggest that others are not. The greatest support for third-party endorsement claims is seen within the trustworthy and ambiguity/forewarning factors. Based on the 7-point Likert scale (7 = strongly agree), participants expressed agreement with the statement, *News isn't written the same way as advertising* ($M = 5.07$). Also *I can be confident that the news media aren't trying to sell me some product or service* ($M = 5.02$). They also tended to agree with the statement, *Seeing positive information about a product in the news gives it stature and importance in my mind* ($M = 4.95$). However, they agreed somewhat less with the other statements, *A positive story about a product or service is essentially a recommendation to purchase it* ($M = 4.68$) and *When I read a news story, I feel confident that the reporter has researched the story fully* ($M = 4.61$).

By contrast, people did not (or were unwilling to) admit that they were any less skeptical about news versus advertising. The acceptance of news is not automatic, based upon responses

to the statement, *I let down my defenses when I see product information in the form of news* ($M=3.79$). Indeed, respondents expressed a considerable level of skepticism about media, which extended to both news and advertising. Respondents expressed the greatest overall agreement with the statement, *When I see an ad, I know someone is trying to sell me something* ($M=5.69$). However, they also didn't appear to think that news media were necessarily independent, reflected in agreement with the statement, *The media often act of spokespersons for special interests* ($M=4.88$) and their disagreement with the statement that *The news media are independent institutions that are not beholden to other organizations in society* ($M=3.59$). Moreover, respondents confuted the argument that news media workers are experts. They disagreed with the statement, *Most news reporters and editors are more knowledgeable about products and services than advertising people* ($M=3.52$).

Although participants were distrustful of advertising, it is insightful to note that the respondents slightly agreed with the statement, *I would prefer to obtain product information in ads rather than news* ($M=4.30$) and found advertising a more convenient or accessible form of product information: *Ads are more reliable than news as a source of product information* ($M=5.26$). In part, this might reflect the ubiquitous nature of advertising compared to news, particularly in the context of daily television watching. This might explain the response to the statement, *I pay less attention to news than advertising* ($M=5.01$).

DISCUSSION

This review essay has examined the claims made about implied third-party endorsement effects and suggested an alternative audience-oriented conceptualization that more adequately explains the process involved. It also reviewed the experimental research conducted to date comparing the effectiveness of news versus advertising, and presented original findings of research intended to probe the underlying perceptions of these two classes of media content.

Two key conclusions emerge.

First, based upon the several approaches examined here, there is little evidence to support claims made by professionals and perpetuated by some researchers that *implied third-party endorsement* is a viable explanation for any advantage enjoyed by news versus advertising in the processing of mediated information. The notion can be challenged on both theoretical and empirical grounds. The evidence suggests news does *not* uniformly outperform advertising. Although a few early, simple experiments found main effects consistent with third-party endorsement claims, at least five variables have been identified that appear to moderate content class effects that favor news over advertising: the featured spokesperson, topic/product involvement, prior product attitude, product knowledge/familiarity, and argument quality. Still other, yet-to-be-identified factors could moderate content class effects in a similar way. The underlying assumptions behind implied third-party endorsement claims also are directly confuted when audience members are asked questions about their patterns of using news versus advertising. Evidence from the Hallahan study suggests that respondents (who were admittedly

students, and whose views might not reflect the entire population), prefer advertising to news, found advertising more reliable, and questioned the independence of media institutions as well as the expertise of media workers. Such disaffirming findings make it difficult to accept the basic premise that news is superior to advertising.

Second, despite these disaffirming results, there is strong evidence that suggests that audiences are more positively predisposed to processing information in the form of news compared to advertising. Stated another way, audiences might be *less negatively predisposed* toward news than advertising. This lends support to the contention that the effects previously attributed to third-party endorsements are actually the result of biased processing by audiences. The perceptual differences evident in the semantic differential scales comparing *News in General* and *Advertising in General* are consistent with this conclusion. Importantly, the experimental evidence suggests that this advantage might be sufficient to give news an edge in certain cases. For example, Hallahan found that news presented with weak arguments performed equally well with news and advertising presented with strong messages. This would suggest that the content class of the message might drive up attitudinal and conative assessments when information is presented as news. Similarly, Chaiken and Maheswaran found that in situations where the meaning of a message was ambiguous, the presentation of information as news had a positive effect on persuasion by enhancing subjects' confidence in making judgments. However, except in these conditions, it would appear that the bias favoring news is not strong enough for news to outperform advertising when audiences process both types of messages with equal effort.

The time has come for public relations practitioners to abandon *implied third-party endorsement* claims. Although the idea appears to be supported by people's predisposition to favor news over advertising, this advantage can be explained as much by people's dislike of advertising and by their resistance to persuasion attempts than by any characteristic inherent in news. Moreover, the lack of uniform experimental results and disaffirming audience responses makes it difficult to justify such claims.

Old saws die a hard death. While there is no question that implied third-party endorsement has been a tenet of public relations for a long-time, the exact origins of the concept are yet to be unearthed by public relations historians.⁸³ It is interesting to speculate whether the lack of support for this notion today reflects an actual change that has occurred in audience processing, or an historical shift in audience perceptions about the value of news, or both. Similarly, the results might be explained in terms of an increased sophistication on the part of audiences, based on a greater awareness of media operations and persuasion techniques.⁸⁴ However, it is also possible that *implied third-party endorsement* was simply a concoction by practitioners who over-estimated the influence of media on audiences,⁸⁵ or who grossly oversimplified a complex process, or who unwittingly engaged in wishful thinking. Regardless of its origins, the idea simply appears to be theoretically and empirically without merit.

The lack of evidence supporting third-party endorsement claims should not be construed as meaning public relations professionals should abandon publicity. Instead of relying upon simplistic claims about implied endorsements, or reducing publicity's superiority to a matter of

greater credibility, researchers and practitioners alike must renew their vigilance to understand how publicity works vis-à-vis other categories of persuasive messages. Publicity has been largely neglected as serious area of investigation.⁸⁶ In this regard, Lord and Putrevu write:

In this era of information overload and challenged assumptions about the efficacy of traditional marketing approaches, effective promotional strategy increasingly requires an understanding of the consumer response to varying communication formats and sources. Publicity, with its inherent information advantage over advertising on some important dimensions, in addition to its common cost advantage, is becoming an increasingly important strategic element in this environment. The time has come to practitioners and scholars alike to pay more attention to this neglected promotional tool.⁸⁷

Researchers need to focus attention on understanding under what conditions publicity might have an advantage over advertising. For example, in addition to greater credibility, Kotler points out that publicity can reach penetrate *hard-to-reach* audience segments because of its ability to catch audiences *off-guard*.⁸⁸ This reflects the fact that people rely upon news within the mass media to fulfill a variety of needs and to obtain gratifications in their daily lives.⁸⁹ Researchers must understand more about the ways that people use public relations-originated information in their daily lives as one way of understanding how incidental exposure through publicity might increase attention to topics in ways not possible with advertising. The validity of this approach is evident in the semantic differential scale results reported here that suggest news is perceived as having more utilitarian value, i.e. being more relevant, useful, informative, involving, and interesting. It is also important to point out that most of the comparative experimental research reported here utilized forced-exposure situations, where subjects were required to read publicity or advertising messages. Research is needed to examine how, in natural settings, audiences are predisposed to attend to publicity messages versus advertising.

Kotler also suggests that an advantage of publicity is the opportunity it represents to imbue a product, service or cause with *drama* and to capitalize upon the *inherent news* value of events.⁹⁰ These are advantages that also must be understood more fully. Publicity can generate excitement, word-of-mouth, and levels of involvement in topics that exceed those possible with advertising. Similarly, publicity might have advantages in how new products, services and ideas gain public acceptance and thus become ingrained in popular culture. These effects are separate from any advantages related to source credibility. Therein might lie publicity's real advantage.

One of the unintended consequences of the profession's slavish devotion to *implied third-party endorsement* theory and the greater credibility of publicity messages is the mistaken belief that news is *de facto* superior to other content classes in which persuasive or promotional messages might appear. This is a myth that should be dispelled. Publicity serves as the mainstay for many public relations programs, while other messages types are relegated to secondary roles. The time has arrived when researchers and practitioners must examine the

relative effectiveness of a far wider range of media or channel types, including controlled media, interactive media, events and one-on-one communications.⁹¹ Researchers and practitioners must also begin to understand the effectiveness of hybrid messages that cross traditional content class lines and blend qualities of publicity and advertising. Examples of such genres include advertorials, infomercials, and product placements.⁹²

Finally, in this context, PR researchers and theorists must expand their horizons to understand more thoughtfully under what circumstances *advertising* might provide advantages over publicity in public relations campaigns. Advertising has been accepted in certain, but limited segments of public relations practice. In particular, corporations engage in some image, issue and financial advertising, while not-for-profit organizations rely upon public service advertising. The current trend toward integrated communication recognizes the need to dismantle arbitrary distinctions and to deploy the full array of communications tools in combination.⁹³ In fact, advertising is a perfectly acceptable form of communication that should not be viewed as being in opposition to publicity.⁹⁴ In this regard, public relations pioneer Ivy Lee advised in 1925:

Use all the advertising space you can afford to pay for. The people are interested in so many other things that you have to make special efforts to get their attention. Many things will be published as news in the news columns of the papers, but the people will not always read the news columns.

The great value of advertising space is not merely to get the thing into the paper--you can often get something in as news--but it is to be able to command your location in the paper, to be able to write your own headlines, and to be able to lay out your own typographical display. In this way, you can command the attention of people at least for a fleeting moment.

And unless you can get the attention of people away from the great mass of things which are claiming their notice nowadays, there is really not much object in having the thing printed at all.⁹⁵

Table 1

**SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL ITEMS COMPARING
ADVERTISING IN GENERAL AND NEWS IN GENERAL**

Means (Standard Deviations)

Item	News	Advertising	Diff- erence	t-value
Credibility Factor				
Trustworthy/not trustworthy	5.35 (1.32)	3.60 (1.44)	-1.75	18.39
Believable/not believable	5.51 (1.24)	4.33 (1.34)	-1.18	13.53
Accurate/not accurate	5.38 (1.27)	4.23 (1.31)	-1.15	13.08
Utility Factor				
Relevant/not relevant	5.73 (1.30)	4.76 (1.14)	-.96	12.01
Useful/not useful	5.89 (1.11)	5.05 (1.12)	-.83	11.46
Informative/not informative	6.06 (1.22)	5.24 (1.12)	-.82	11.43
Involving/not involving	5.48 (1.33)	4.78 (1.26)	-.69	8.67
Interesting/not interesting	5.80 (1.30)	5.24 (1.51)	-.66	6.94
Index of 8 items	5.65 (.90)	4.64 (.90)	-1.01	18.41

All matched-pairs t-values significant at $p \leq .000$, based on 326-328 df. Based on 7-point semantic differential scale when 7=positive valence, 1=negative valence.

Table 2

**MEAN RESPONSES AND FACTOR ANALYSIS
OF MEDIA PRACTICES BELIEFS ITEMS**

Means and Standard Deviations
Factor Loadings Based on
Varimax Rotation

Item	Mean (SD)	Factors				
		I	II	III	IV	V
Use/Preference						
I pay less attention to news than to advertising.	5.01 (1.55)	.779				
Ads are more reliable than news as a source of product information.	5.26 (1.74)	.664				
I would prefer to obtain product information in ads rather than news.	4.30 (1.57)	.542	-.453			
When I watch television, I pay the same attention to commercials as I do programs.	2.90 (1.55)	-.614				
Trustworthiness						
A positive news story about a product or service is essentially a recommendation to purchase it.	4.68 (1.35)		.729	.309		
I let down my defenses when I see product information in form of news.	3.79 (1.43)		.688			
When I read a news story, I feel confident that the reporter has researched the story fully.	4.61 (1.33)		.576			

Table 2 (continued)

	Mean (SD)	I	II	Factors III	IV	V
Intent to Persuade						
The media often act as spokes- persons for special interests.	4.88 (1.23)			.821		
When I see an ad, I know that someone is trying to sell me something.	5.69 (1.34)			.641		
News Ambiguity/Forewarning						
News isn't written the same way as advertising.	5.07 (1.30)				.710	
I can be confident that the news media aren't trying to sell me some product or service.	5.02 (1.54)			-.321	.681	
Seeing positive information about a product in the news gives it stature and importance in my mind.	4.95 (1.22)		.359		.583	
The news media are independent institutions that are not beholden to other organiza- tions in society.	3.59 (1.47)				.401	
Expertise						
Stories about products aren't always going to be positive, but can be.	4.99 (1.31)					.678
Most news reporters and editors are more knowledgeable about products and services than advertising people.	3.52 (1.48)					-.751
Eigenvalue		2.54	2.32	1.46	1.14	1.00
Variance Explained-%		16.9	15.5	9.8	7.6	6.7

Only factor loadings greater than .30 are included in the analysis.
Five factors explain 56.5% of total variance.

Figure 1

A Typology of Endorsements

	NONMEDIATED		MEDIATED	
	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid
Explicit	Presentation by sales representative for a particular brand	Consultant/Peer recommendation	Celebrity endorsements in advertising	Editorial page endorsements
	Agents/brokers choose certain brands to represent	Observable use of product by celebrity or other referent	Broadcast show sponsorships	Consumer service features or mentions in a column
	Retail store offers array of brands	Free use of facilities by a group that an organization wants to support	Product Placements in movies or books	Mentions of brands in talk shows/news/coverage of events
	Affinity marketing programs			Mere presence of products in news
Implicit				

Figure 2
Experimental Findings on Effects of
Publicity Versus Advertising

Study Authors (Year) N=subjects Design Message Topic	Independent Variables Manipulated	Dependent Variables Measured	Support for Third-Party Endorsement	Comments
Schwarz, Kumpf & Bussman (1983) N=54 female German undergraduates 2x2 factorial New textbook	Journal review v. text for ad Explicit v. implicit call for action	Behavioral intent: -Read the book -Buy the book	Yes	Less explicit review book review created greatest behavioral intent; explicit ad was least effective.
Anderson & Abbott (1985) N=30 households Split field experiment New bacon product	Two-minute infomercial v. 30-second TV spot	Recall Attitudes Purchase intent	Possible confound	Infomercial watchers remembered more facts, had more positive beliefs and greater purchase intent. Results confounded by different lengths of stimuli
Salmon, Reid, Pokrysznski & Willett (1985) N=203 undergraduates 2x2 factorial Advocacy message imbedded in <i>Atlanta Constitution</i>	News v. ad Commercial (Pepsi) v. non-commercial (American Cancer Society) source	Learning Attitude toward message/perceptions of bias Behavioral intent	Qualified	Advocacy message from American Cancer Society was perceived as less biased in news format and thus "legitimized by third-party credibility." But ads were more interesting and informative, thus more persuasive in terms of behavioral intent

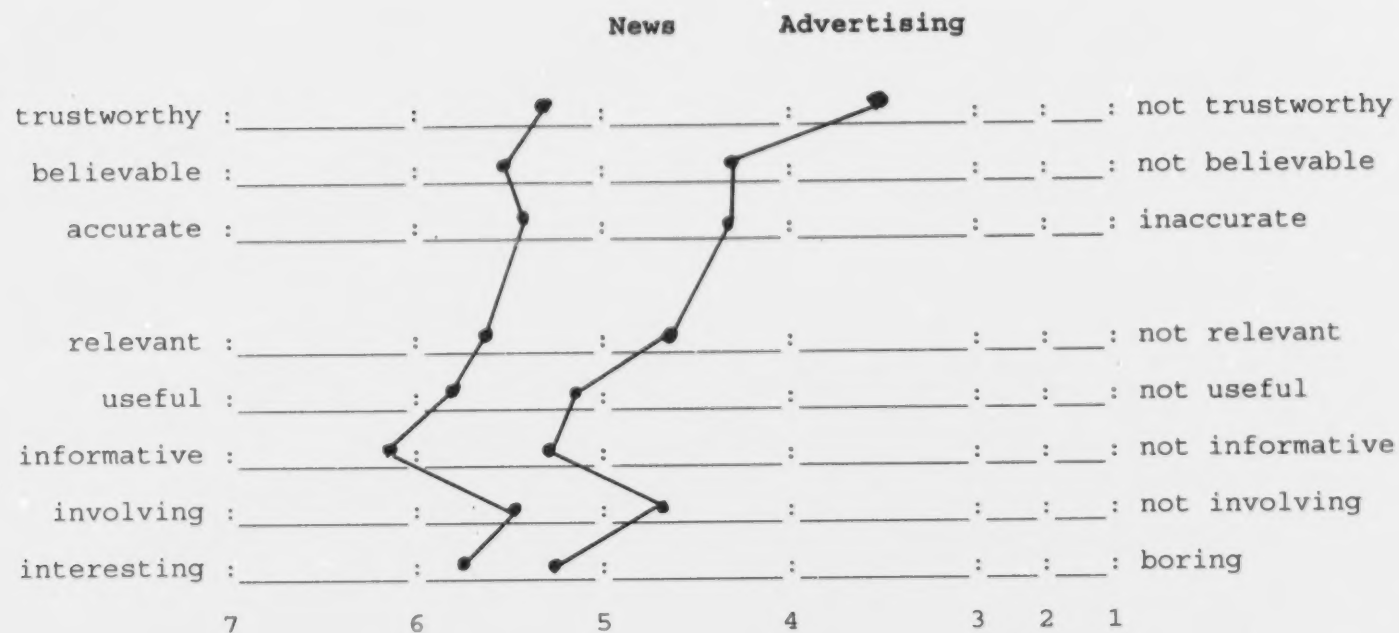
Hausknecht, Wilkinson & Prough (1989) N = 120 students Diet pill	Ads v. 3 formats of advertorials (no label, low stimulus label: "ad"; high stimulus label: "advertisement") Demographic variables	Message truthfulness Message believability Product evaluation (affect, preferences, intention to buy)	Qualified	Unlabeled advertorial judged more truth and believable, but only by individuals with poor product knowledge. Ss with positive attitudes toward diet pills assessed all treatments equally. Ss with unfavorable attitudes responded most negatively to advertorials with the high stimulus label (underscored possibly deceptive nature of advertorials).
d'Astous & Hébert (1991) N = 29 students (10 females, 19 males) 2x2 factorial Condominiums and automobiles	Ads v. <i>publi-reportage</i> (Canadian advertorials) Products (condominiums v. automobiles)	Recall Product attitudes Source credibility	Partial support (possible confound)	For condominiums only the editorial message resulted in higher recall and more positive attitudes. No format- based differences found for automobiles. Failure to find source credibility differences might be accounted for by measure's low reliability ($\alpha = .63$).
Hennessey & Anderson (1990) N = 165 students 2x2x2x2 factorial Announcement of a new graduation requirement	Endorsement by expert (university dean) v. no endorsement Argument strength: high v. low Involvement: high (immediate) v. low (delayed implementation) Commercial source (university news bulletin) v. commercial source (ad from fictitious company)	Attitudes Behavioral intent	Possible confound	Found support for elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) wherein the source (news bulletin v. ad) had no effect among students with high involvement (needed the course in order to graduate). For individuals with low involvement, news bulletin from the university was more persuasive. However, relevance is unclear because news story never actually appeared in a newspaper or other medium.

Cameron (1994) N=42 (26 undergraduates, 16 non-students) 2x2 factorial	Advertorial ads v. news stories with same content and format. Labelled ("advertisement") v. no label	Information gain immediately after exposure Information gain two weeks after exposure	Yes	Found highest recognition immediately following exposure to the editorial treatment, lowest scores in case of labeled advertisements in the delayed condition. Qualified the results based on limitations of the labelling approach and use of long-copy, all-type advertorial messages versus conventional approaches.
Straughan, Bleske & Zhao (1994) N=196 university students 2x2 factorial	News story v. ad Commercial spokesperson (CEO of pharmaceutical company) v. noncommercial spokesperson (president of mental health association)	Message Assessments (trustworthiness, interest, informativeness) Source Assessments (expertise, believability, power, persuasiveness) Behavioral intent of contacting organization as requested in message	Qualified	Use of news and the CEO had indirect effects on attitudes and behavioral intent because news is more credible than ads, and CEO was perceived as more interesting and persuasive. Concluded news format had a strong positive relationship with perceptions of source's expertise, knowledge and believability.
Chaiken & Maheswaran (1994) N=369 undergraduates 2x2x2 factorial XT-100 telephone answering machine	News (<i>Consumer Reports</i>) v. ad (pamphlet from KMart) Personal importance: high v. low Message quality: unambiguous v. ambiguous	Attitudes	Qualified	Found support for Chaiken's Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1987). The reading a excerpt from <i>Consumer Reports</i> positively impacted attitudes when a) involvement was low and messages were unambiguous and b) message was ambiguous regardless of involvement levels. When task importance was high, only argument quality was significant, but source also had a positive influence in the ambiguous message condition.

Chew, Slater & Kelley (1995) N=20 2x2 within subjects Messages for four products	News v. ad Product involvement: high v. low Brand familiarity: familiar v. not familiar	Credibility Purchase intent	Qualified	No main effects based on message type. Type and brand familiarity interacted with involvement to affect credibility of message. As involvement increased, credibility of ads for familiar products decreased, while credibility of article remained constant. As involvement with product increases, the credibility of article about an unfamiliar brand decreases and credibility of an ad for unfamiliar brand stays constant. No effects found on purchase intent.
Hallahan (1995) N=329 undergraduates 2x2x2 mixed factorial Messages for four fictitious products in prototype magazine for college students.	Content class: news v. ads Argument strength: strong v. weak Product involvement (within subjects): high (2 products) v. low (2 products)	Recall Number of cognitive thoughts Valence of cognitive thoughts Believability Attitude toward message Attitude toward brand Purchase intent	Qualified	Content class interacted with product involvement so that people reading about high involvement products shut down processing, but were prompted to learn more about low involvement products. Scores for ads hovered in between within a vary narrow range. For attitudinal and conative measures, content class interacted with argument strength, so that there was no difference between news and ads with strong arguments. News presented with weak arguments scored equally as well, but weak ads scored lower.

Figure 3

Semantic Differential Comparisons of
News in General and Advertising in General



Based on 7-point semantic differential scale, with some items randomly reversed.

Notes

1. The title of this article borrows, with apologies, from one of the most complete early discussions of publicity's implied third-party endorsement effect: Richard M. Detwiler, "Yes, Virginia, It's All True--What They Say About Third Party Endorsement," *Public Relations Journal* 29 (May 1974), pp. 10-11.
2. Morris B. Rotman, "PR is Still a Necessary Adjunct to Efficient Marketing Today," *Advertising and Sales Promotion* (September 3, 1973), pp. 13.
3. Kenneth Roman and Jane Mass, *The New How to Advertise*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 102.
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Searching for Excellence in Public Relations:
An analysis of the public relations efforts of five forestry companies in the U.S.

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ABSTRACT

Searching for Excellence in Public Relations: An analysis of the public relations efforts of five forestry companies in the U.S.

This preliminary study was designed to gauge the use of public relations and to provide a baseline evaluation of the public relations programs of five forestry companies according to J. Grunig's 17 factors of excellent public relations (1992). Companies were chosen because of their prominence in the industry and availability of information. Data was collected from the web sites of each company, employee interviews and various public relations materials produced by each company.

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Introduction

Throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s, corporations have become increasingly aware of the importance and value of public relations and its impact on a company's bottom line. Martin Sorrell (1998), chief executive of WPP Group plc., said that "clients regard public relations as an important part of their communications program, a part that should be closely integrated with advertising, research and specialist communications activities" and that the CEOs' attitudes toward public relations are "fairly high up on their agenda, particularly in relations to the stock market and their relationship with institutional investors" (p. 48).

Corporations and top management are realizing that public relations is not just a media relations function, but that public relations can help foster strong, positive corporate culture and image, as well as spur financial or economical growth. Public and constituent support is crucial to the advancement and continued growth of any company. Claire Hoertz Badaracco (1996) supported this by stating, "Today the public seems to demand that business expand its concern for shareholders to include all stakeholders. Citizen groups have brought into the cultural mainstream the idea that successful businesses bear a social obligation to serve the common good" (p. 14).

The days of top-down management are numbered for the corporation that wants to remain afloat in the competitive arena. As more and more CEOs and senior managers recognize the necessity to change organizational culture and corporate image to reflect a proactive, successful and responsible operation, public relations functions will (and do) play a key role in implementing those changes.

Many public relations scholars (e.g. J. Grunig, 1992), practitioners and supporters believe that public relations is key to efficient and successful management. Webster (1990) summed up

the role and importance of public relations to management in the following statement: "To be strategic, public relations must pass one basic test: At a minimum, everything done must be aligned with the corporate vision or mission – the company's reason for being – and must substantially contribute to achieving the organization's objectives. Ideally, public relations should be part of the team helping to create the corporate mission and set the objectives" (p. 18).

The forestry industry is supported by several large, multi-national corporations that seek the imposition of legislation, set environmental standards and educate communities about forest products and uses. Five such companies, Boise Cascade, Georgia-Pacific, International Paper, Louisiana-Pacific and Weyerhaeuser Corporation have set corporate standards that support the positive move toward responsible corporate citizenship and public relations.

This is a preliminary study designed to gauge the use of public relations and also to provide a baseline evaluation of the public relations programs of Boise Cascade, International Paper, Georgia-Pacific, Louisiana Pacific and Weyerhaeuser Corporation according to J. Grunig's 17 factors of excellent public relations (1992). Companies were chosen because of their prominence in the industry and the availability of information on each. Evaluation will be derived from data collected from the web sites of each company, interviews of employees from the companies and various public relations materials such as annual reports and brochures produced by the companies and industry organizations.

Following is a literature review of the history of the forestry industry and the pressures from constituencies and activists to make changes in the way the five companies do business. The section also reviews literature of the strategic management of public relations.

The Status of the Forestry Industry

American forests are growing and provide essential tools for everyday life, according to countless materials, reports and statistics from forest, wood and paper companies and forestry

associations and college programs. The forestry industry provides adequate habitat for many species, helps protect the environment and the ozone layer and contributes to the country's economy now more than ever. In fact, the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), a leading professional organization for the forestry industry, claims that the science of forestry was established in the U.S. around the turn of the century in response to the reckless cutting down of trees (*Summer 1996 Quick Facts About America's Forest & Paper Industry*, cited by Boise Cascade).

According to the *US Forests: Facts and Figures 1995* compiled by the AF&PA, U.S. forests have grown four times more wood annually since 1920. Nearly one-third or 737 million acres of the U.S. is covered by forestland, which is approximately 67 percent as much forest as there was in the 1600s. In addition, the forestry industry is ranked among the top 10 employers in 46 of the 50 states. Individual forestry companies have donated over one million acres of land, valued at over \$400 million, to social causes and other public uses (*Summer 1996 Quick Facts About America's Forest & Paper Industry*, cited by Boise Cascade).

The forestry industry and companies have made numerous commitments to be responsible corporate citizens, ensure safety for employees through education and innovation and establish new technologies to improve the health and productivity of forests. Companies also are leading the way in planting seedlings and becoming involved in community education and restoration through programs such as Habitat for Humanity, Project Learning Tree and 4-H among others. Forestry manufacturers and companies also have formed partnerships with and financially support conservation organizations such the Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

So, what do all the statistics and commitments *really* say about the industry, or more specifically, the major companies that contribute to the industry? Timber harvesting practices

such as clearcutting and virtually every aspect of the forestry industry has been under scrutiny and attack from environmental groups, specifically activist groups, and communities throughout the country for years. These groups hold the industry and its major contributors (like the five companies in this study) accountable for deforestation, reckless and needless cutting, pollution, endangerment of wildlife habitats and species and a variety of crimes against the environment and society.

Many of the accusations of these groups were valid and integral to making the forestry industry and renegade companies or forest harvesters accountable for their actions. In past years, the industry resented interference from outside groups and tended to ignore cries from activists. As Jack Creighton, former president of Weyerhaeuser Corporation stated to the Arkansas Corporate Council for Conservation in Little Rock on May 21, 1997, "...We had a slight hearing problem that led some to believe we had a closed mind. We had failed to notice how the public's expectations and values were changing concerning forestland management" (<http://weyerhaeuser.com/corp/ark.htm>, November 9, 1997).

Today, with increasing pressure from government, communities, environmentalists, stakeholders and various constituencies of the individual companies, the industry has attempted to change its approach to environment, publics and society in general. As Creighton stated, "We're listening now, and we are changing" (<http://weyerhaeuser.com/corp/ark.htm>, November 9, 1997).

Public Relations Excellence Factors – What Excellent Public Relations Should Be

In the book, *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, J. Grunig (primary editor) combines and outlines general theories that contribute to excellent public relations. He compiled 17 factors that he considers characteristic of excellent public relations

programs (see appendix for complete list). These factors contribute to the normative theory of public relations or how public relations *should* be conducted.

To better understand these characteristics, it is important to have a definition of public relations. J. Grunig (1992) and scholars and practitioners who have contributed to the book believe that public relations and communication management should be used to develop mutual understanding between an organization and its publics in order to serve the public interest and contribute to informed debate about issues within the society. The book offers the following definition and explanation of public relations and communication management.

Public relations...is the management of communication between an organization and its publics...Public relations/communication management is broader than communication technique and broader than specialized public relations programs such as media relations or publicity. Public relations and communication management describe the overall planning, execution, and evaluation of an organization's communication with both external and internal publics – groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals (p. 4).

J. Grunig organizes the 17 characteristics of excellent public relations in four categories or levels of an organization where the characteristics exist – the program level, departmental level, organizational level and the effects of excellent public relations.

Methodology

Data were collected from the 1996 annual reports, environmental reports and corporate literature of the five sample organizations: Boise Cascade, Georgia-Pacific, International Paper, Louisiana-Pacific and Weyerhaeuser Corporation. In addition, literature from the American Forest & Paper Association, the Forestry Media Center at Oregon State University and American Forests Magazine was reviewed to determine the standards of operation in the forestry industry.

The web pages of the five companies as well as the web pages of activist groups such as the Sierra Club and Greenpeace also were surveyed to obtain a background and gauge the state of affairs in the forestry industry. Interviews were conducted with public relations practitioners

at each of the five companies, one forester at Louisiana-Pacific and a former public relations practitioner at Georgia-Pacific. Four females and three males responded to the interviews and were promised anonymity. Preliminary questions were formulated to determine the following of each company:

- basic public relations objectives
- organizational structure
- the public relations department(s) relationship/role with senior management
- primary target publics
- company management philosophy
- demographics of communication employees and senior management
- types of employee incentive programs

Follow-up questions sought to elaborate on previous answers and to determine how each company uses research.

Participants currently working in public relations at each company were recruited via e-mail. The Louisiana-Pacific forester and former Georgia-Pacific employee are acquaintances of the author.

The following sections will examine how J. Grunig's characteristics of excellent public relations (divided into the program level, departmental level, organizational level and effects of public relations) play into the communication departments of the five companies, as well as critique how the five companies are functioning based on the definitions and theories of J. Grunig and other communication scholars. This study proposes that the five companies are attempting, if not fulfilling, to practice excellent public relations.

The Program Level

The key characteristic for the program level is *strategic management*. If communication is managed strategically by the organization, if there is a plan set to deal with anticipated problems and address individual publics, then that organization is on the road to excellent public relations. Strategic public relations means that the public relations practitioner has identified

different publics, or stakeholders, and potential problems that may arise between the stakeholders and the organization. The practitioner or communications department defines goals and objectives for communicating with the different publics, develops a communication plan or program to address problems and reach objectives, and evaluates how effective those programs will be. Good communication plans have evaluation methods built in throughout the program to determine if it is working.

A strong public relations plan strives not for short-term changes but long-term changes that will positively affect overall attitudes and behavior toward the organization. To change attitudes in the long run, the plan must take into account the fact that time is needed to nurture the relationship between the public and the organization. The organization cannot rely on how things have been done before (historically) and must strive to change *with* the publics. New programs and techniques must be developed to reach publics. As J. Grunig (1992) stated, "The more significant, the more widespread and the longer lasting the effect chosen as an objective, the longer it will take a communication program to achieve that effect (p. 14)."

Analysis of the Five Companies According to the Program Level

The forestry companies appear to have a strategic plan in place to build relationships with various publics and do a good job of outlining accomplishments and programs they implement in the communications materials they produce such as annual reports, progress reports and web sites. A review of the web sites and conversations with communication/public relations practitioners of the companies reveal five distinct publics: employees, shareholders/investors, communities the companies' work in, environmentalists and government. Even though the media and various other publics such as activists groups are acknowledged, they are not considered a target public by most companies. As a practitioner from Boise Cascade's Corporate

Communications explained, "We less directly target environmental activists, because generally, we're at opposite ends of the issues with little chance of establishing a meaningful dialogue. We do attempt to respond to inaccurate information environmental activists might distribute about our company or practices" (personal communication, November 18, 1997).

A communications team leader from International Paper says the company believes that employees are the best ambassadors and that is where International Paper focuses a large amount of its efforts (personal communication, November 11, 1997). Carole M. Howard (1996) reiterated this point when she stated, "Remember that employees are the company's best ambassadors or loudest critics. Negative quotes from uniformed or angry staff can quickly undo an otherwise positive media effort" (p. 45).

Other companies including International Paper focus efforts in communities where the company works. The communications team leader from International Paper says communities are an important public because they push for regulations that will affect the company. He describes International Paper's efforts to reach its various publics as concentric circles. "It's hard to get past the first circle," he says, so International Paper starts from within and works out (personal communication, November 11, 1997).

Boise Cascade conducted a survey of its publics several years ago and found that the most important thing when developing an opinion about forestry companies was environmental responsibility. In response, Boise Cascade developed teams of its seven main operating areas (divisions of the company that sell different products, such as paper products, office products, etc.) and created brochures, advertisements and other materials to inform publics about the company's environmental practices. Boise Cascade encourages feedback from its publics and provides a toll free number as well as several opportunities throughout its web site for feedback (personal communication, November 18, 1997).

Georgia-Pacific also has addressed the environmental concerns of its publics. In fact, the majority of Georgia-Pacific's web site deals with environmental practices and conservation efforts of the company and even provides readers with its 11-point environmental strategy and commitment to sustainable forestry (<http://www.gp.com/enviro/ncpa.html>, November 15, 1997).

As did most of the companies studied, Weyerhaeuser recently underwent refocusing and reorganization. In its 1996 Annual Environmental Progress Report, the company claims to be listening to its publics' priorities. "We have factored these viewpoints into business decisions and worked to improve cooperation with our neighbors, other landowners, agencies, regulatory authorities, the public and customers around the world" (p. 24). Weyerhaeuser has established strategic plans to cater to public needs such as town hall meetings and the Environmental Education Initiative program that provides teachers with hands-on activities for children to learn about forest resources.

Louisiana-Pacific has taken longer than the other companies to realize the value and importance of public relations and strategic management. In fact, in 1996, the company saw drastic changes including a new CEO and several top management officers. According to the project manager interviewed, one of Louisiana-Pacific's main goals right now is to "keep our audience updated and communicate clearly our goals and plans to everyone" (personal communication, March 19, 1998). The management forester interviewed from Louisiana-Pacific said, "Louisiana-Pacific's business was not what it could have been. Management wasn't listening -- but things are changing now." According to the forester at Louisiana-Pacific, management functioned more top-down and there was not a strong relationship between the "management you never see" and employees of other levels (personal communication, November 15, 1997). In a letter to stockholders, new Chairman and CEO Mark Suwyn said, "Let me start by saying Louisiana-Pacific is a very different company than it was just twelve

months ago." Louisiana-Pacific has set strategic plans into motion to improve customer, employee and investor relations as well as economics. "We established a new strategic direction, reorganized and brought in talented senior management to lead the actions necessary to accomplish the new goals" (<http://www.lpcorp.com/lptoday/letter.html>, November 17, 1997).

The Departmental Level

J. Grunig and the contributing writers (1992) reviewed management and public relations research to determine characteristics of excellent public relations departments. They determined that "excellent public relations departments are defined as those that are managed strategically in order to maximize the contribution of communication programs to organizational effectiveness" (p.16). Their findings pinpointed "12 characteristics of excellent organizations, some of which suggest characteristics of excellent public relations departments and some of which suggest how communication contributes to excellence in overall management" (p. 16). The 12 characteristics are (p. 16):

1. *Human Resources* – encouraging autonomy among employees and being concerned with the quality of work life.
2. *Organic Structure* –eliminating "bureaucratic, hierarchical organizational structures" (p.16)
3. *Intrapreneurship* – fostering an entrepreneurial atmosphere within the organization
4. *Symmetrical Communication Systems* –keeping abreast on current issues of concern to constituencies
5. *Leadership* –relying on management-by-walking-around and providing "a vision and direction" for the organization (p.16)
6. *Strong, Participative Cultures* – integrating "strong culture that values human resources, organic structures, innovation and symmetrical communication" (p. 17)
7. *Strategic Planning* – identifying key opportunities and constraints
8. *Social Responsibility* – tracking the effects of organizational decisions on society
9. *Support for Women and Minorities* – recognizing the value of diversity and fostering opportunities for women and minorities
10. *Quality is a Priority* – demonstrating quality as a priority in everything from the company mission statement to every decision made
11. *Effective Operational Systems* – developing organizational or work systems that implement the "day-to-day management" of characteristics previously mentioned (p. 17)
12. *Collaborative Societal Culture* – emphasizing "Collaboration, participation, trust and mutual responsibility" in society (p. 17)

These 12 characteristics help define J. Grunig's (1992) seven prescriptions for excellent public relations at the departmental level. According to these prescriptions, a company should have an integrated public relations department that is separate from marketing and should have a direct reporting relationship to senior management. Companies also should be familiar with the two-way symmetrical model, have a senior public relations person in a managerial role and the communications/public relations department should have the potential for excellent public relations as indicated by knowledge of the symmetrical model and managerial role, academic training in public relations and a degree of professionalism. In addition, a company must provide equal opportunities for advancement for men and women (p. 28).

Analysis of the Five Companies According to the Departmental Prescriptions

Each of the forestry companies studied has a public relations/communication manager in the senior management. Weyerhaeuser was the only company that split its senior management into senior officers (8) and separate division leaders (41), while other companies such as International Paper divided management into directors or board members and senior management. In other words, the top management of individual divisions was a part of overall senior management (Weyerhaeuser and International Paper annual reports, 1996).

According to the regional team member at Weyerhaeuser, corporate affairs is a blanket that covers government affairs and other communication functions. Marketing and sales promotion do not fall into that category, but as representatives from all five companies said, sometimes the lines are crossed and public relations and marketing tend to go hand in hand. Weyerhaeuser's corporate affairs is divided into regional teams that meet quarterly (and sometimes more often), to discuss issues that effect and will effect each division, department or area of operation (personal communication, March 19, 1998).

The literature and annual reports of the five companies suggest that the public relations function is part of the dominant coalition. Each organization cites specific lists of strategies, mission statements and goals that deal directly with publics. However, not all public relations functions were streamlined into one department as J. Grunig suggests. Georgia-Pacific combines several of the key communications functions into one department – Environmental, Government Affairs and Communications. But, Human Resources and Corporate Services were kept separate.

Weyerhaeuser and the remaining companies have a corporate communications office that seems to be the hub from which other departments such as human resources and legal affairs stem from. Corporate communications handles the majority of the strategic planning, press relations, inquiries and campaigns but one department cannot control or foster relationships with *all* of the publics in companies as large as these. Departments like Human Relations and Investor Relations aid the company (and the Corporate Communications Department) in forming stronger relationships with its individual publics, such as employees and investors. Without these branches of communication departments, the companies would not be able to address as many issues as they are able to now.

While J. Grunig prescribes that in an ideal situation, there should be a single integrated public relations department, he acknowledges that this cannot be enforced. But others point out that separate departments carrying out public relations functions can be effective if a reporting relationship exists between the departments. Johnnie Johnson (1990) says that many smaller companies can combine communication roles effectively but that in large companies “it would be almost impossible to cover the entire realm of corporate communications without distinctly differentiated and managed skill specialization units” (p. 28).

Johnson (1990) also pointed out that: "There are numerous advantages to having the two realms of corporate communications – investor relations and other public relations – work well together. Unfortunately, the importance of a unified effort is seen most often in hindsight, after something goes wrong" (p. 28). From the literature distributed to investors, employees and other publics of these companies, it is clear that the companies are learning from past mistakes. Since its reorganization in 1990, Weyerhaeuser has taken major steps to "align shareholder and employee interests" as well as establish valuable programs throughout communities (Weyerhaeuser Annual Report, 1996, p.6).

"In many companies, PR and marketing are closely tied. That isn't true at Boise Cascade. Our individual businesses handle marketing and advertising for their products," said the practitioner from Boise Cascade's Corporate Communications. This seems to ring true for the other companies as well, though it is hard to distinguish. A former account manager in the Gypsum Division of Georgia-Pacific said that marketing was totally separate from public relations (personal communication, November 20, 1997). As with Boise Cascade, individual departments or divisions handle their own marketing and advertising. Public relations is handled mainly by Corporate Communications, Human Resources, Investor Relations, Environmental Affairs and Legal Affairs – all who have a reporting relationship and are usually housed at corporate headquarters (personal communication, November 20, 1997).

The next characteristic describes an understanding of the symmetrical model of public relations. The strategies and goals of all five companies demonstrated knowledge of the symmetrical model. The web pages of each company provided adequate opportunity for feedback from visitors. International Paper and Boise Cascade responded to an interview request via e-mail the next day while Louisiana-Pacific responded the following day. Georgia-Pacific responded within the week while Weyerhaeuser responded to the initial contact for an interview

only by sending materials through the mail. However, Weyerhaeuser did respond promptly to the follow-up interview.

Employee publications such as International Paper's *Unity Magazine* and Weyerhaeuser's environmental publication, *Managing Our Forest Resources*, feature invitations for comment and feedback from publics. *Weyerhaeuser Today*, an employee publication features a column called "Ask Steve" where employees are encouraged to send the president questions. Chairman and CEO A.D. Correll of Georgia-Pacific made an effort to bridge the gap between senior management and employees by addressing employees as "fellow coworkers" in an issue of *Growth*, an employee newsletter (September/October 1996). *Growth* also features letters and questions from employees and "families and friends."

To achieve excellence at the departmental level, J. Grunig also suggests that the *potential* for excellent public relations must be present. In other words, practitioners should have:

- (1) the ability to practice symmetrical public relations as seen in the belief that public relations should build and foster lasting relationships between the organization and its publics based on mutual understanding and growth
- (2) knowledge of the managerial role – they should be aware and have the ability to counsel top management and perform operations such as strategic planning rather than simply the mechanics of writing a press release or building media relationships
- (3) a degree or academic training, and
- (4) a degree of professionalism.

Since communication department heads are part of the dominant coalition in each company, it is safe to say that they are aware of and practice the managerial role. However, it is difficult to distinguish if these communication department heads have academic training in communications. Louisiana-Pacific's web page offered biographical information on its senior management team that outlined the education and job description of each member. From the descriptions provided of the vice presidents of sales and marketing and human resources and the director of corporate communications, none had communication degrees. Degrees included a CPA in accounting, a Ph.D. in organizational behavior and BS in psychology, respectively

(<http://www.lpcorp.com/hq/corpbldg.html>, November 17, 1997). Although Louisiana-Pacific may not have senior managers with communications degrees, many of the employees in communication departments do have such degrees (personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Boise Cascade's practitioner from Corporate Communications said, "Degrees in our department tend to be English, communications and journalism" (personal communication, November 18, 1997). The communications team leader from International Paper agreed that most employees in communications departments at International Paper have a journalism or communication degree. In fact, he estimated that 100 percent of his coworkers had backgrounds in journalism or communications (personal communication, November 11, 1997). Georgia-Pacific's former account manager also estimated that a large percentage of communicators at Georgia-Pacific had communication or related degrees (personal communication, November 20, 1997). Weyerhaeuser's regional team member was unsure of the academic backgrounds of public relations practitioners but assumed that most of them had backgrounds in communications (personal communication, March 19, 1998).

International Paper's communication team leader offered a distinction concerning the academic backgrounds of communicators at International Paper. He said that when hiring for a new position, his department has no real preference if the candidates have public relations degrees or backgrounds specifically, but do prefer they have a journalism or communication background. Candidates with environmental journalism backgrounds are increasingly attractive because of the many environmental issues the company faces (personal communication, November 11, 1997).

The practitioners from Boise Cascade, Georgia-Pacific and International Paper also indicated that communication practitioners in their companies did belong to some type of communication professional organization, but that the organizations were often specialized. For

instance, Boise Cascade's practitioner knew of one employee that belonged to the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and that another belonged to the National Investor Relations Institute. Georgia-Pacific's former account manager suggested employees belonged to professional organizations but could not recall any particular organizations – only that the organizations would be very job-specific. International Paper's communications team leader offered that over half of the communication practitioners at International Paper belonged to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

According to J. Grunig (1992), excellent public relations departments provide equal opportunity for advancement and growth of men and women. While the five companies are relatively strong in fulfilling J. Grunig's prescriptions of the departmental level, each lacks adequate representation of women in senior management (not just in senior communication jobs). The communications team leader at International Paper said that there are two women in senior management (out of 51, according to annual report) and one on the board of directors but that "the next level down is almost entirely female." It is important to note, however, that the management positions held by women are vice president of investor relations and senior vice president and chief financial officer – two positions that are crucial to the company's economic growth (International Paper Annual Report, 1996).

Boise Cascade's practitioner said that two women were on the board of directors (12) and two were executive officers (25). Weyerhaeuser has two women vice presidents, corporate communications and government affairs (personal communication, March 19, 1998) and one woman (beside the corporate secretary listed in the annual report) listed as a division leader. Louisiana-Pacific listed two women out of 11 in senior management. The vice president of sales & marketing is female while the vice president of human resources and the director of corporate communications, both recent hires, are male. However, the project manager from Louisiana-

Pacific pointed out that the person in charge of all Canadian operations was female (personal communication, March 19, 1998). Georgia-Pacific's vice presidents of corporate communications and environmental affairs is female but only two out of the 50 senior officers are female (1996 Annual Report and personal communication, March 19, 1998).

Discussion on the Gender Imbalance in Senior Management

So what does this information say about the companies and equal advancement opportunities for men and women? It is obvious that there is a gender imbalance and that the senior management is male-dominated, but more research needs to be done to determine the reason. There seems to be a lack of female senior management throughout the organizations and not just in communication departments. Representatives from each company, particularly the women, did not view this as a threat. Louisiana-Pacific's project manager said that the men she worked with had been with the company longer and that it seemed more like a coincidence than an intentional move by the company as a whole. International Paper's communication team leader suggested that it could be that the forestry industry is a male-dominated field and many of the senior officers in the company started out as foresters and moved up through the ranks and that women are only recently becoming more involved. Georgia-Pacific's communications director and Weyerhaeuser's regional team member suggested that traditionally there has been fewer females working in the manufacturing industry and that many people are promoted through the ranks starting at the plant level (personal communication, March 19, 1998 and March 23, 1998). Georgia-Pacific's former account manager noted that there are increasingly more women in managerial roles but that efforts are being made to hire and promote women (personal communication, November 20, 1997). International Paper's communication team leader mentioned two senior management positions in communications that recently opened and said

they hope to fill them with female communication practitioners. He also said that competition for women in forestry in general is intense (personal communication, November 11, 1997).

The Organizational Level

J. Grunig's organizational level is characterized by the following:

- the organization's worldview or outlook of public relations
- the position of the public relations director with the dominant coalition
- a participatory rather than authoritarian organizational culture
- a symmetrical system of internal communication
- an organic organizational structure
- a complex and turbulent external environment

Many characteristics of these prescriptions have been described in previous sections.

Analysis of the Five Companies According to the Organizational Prescriptions

First, if the five companies practice symmetrical public relations and are a part of the dominant coalition as defined in the departmental level, it can be assumed that the public relations worldview of the organizations reflects the two-way symmetrical model. All companies encourage feedback from publics and are becoming actively involved with community development, education and environmental causes as well as other issues important to their publics. Several of the CEOs, like Louisiana-Pacific's Suwyn and Weyerhaeuser's former president Creighton, publicly acknowledge and promote the companies' growth and concern for publics.

J. Grunig's second criterion -- that a public relations manager should have power with the dominant coalition, has been demonstrated in the departmental level section of this paper. Webster (1990) offers that, "It is virtually impossible to develop an effective public relations plan in isolation. If possible, the CEO and other senior managers should be real partners with you in creating the plan" (p. 19). While there is a division between the board of directors, senior

management and departmental managers, it seems that lower-level managers in the five companies have a distinct reporting relationship to higher-level management. The team leader from International Paper says that communication departments sign off on material pertinent to the overall communication efforts of the company and include each other in conference calls.

If an organization practices the two-way symmetrical model outlined in the departmental level, then it would seem to follow that the organizational culture would be more participatory rather than authoritarian, since employees are a target audience for each company. In addition, a participatory organizational culture seems to describe a symmetrical system of internal communication or two-way feedback, the fourth characteristic under the organizational level. If employees are encouraged to take an active role in organizational decisions, then their feedback is valued and they are *participating* in, and contributing to the overall organizational culture. The forester from Louisiana-Pacific stated, "There definitely seems to be a general concern from management as to what lower-level employees are doing and management does seem to want to involve employees in company decisions. This wasn't always apparent but in the last year the changes are obvious" (personal communication, November 15, 1997).

Each of the five companies seems to be in the early to middle stages of changing corporate culture and image. Plans have been developed and set into motion to address problems or potential problems with each public, including employees. But it will take time before the companies or the industry will reach what seems to be the underlining goal – to improve public image of the industry as well as the company. As the communication team leader from International Paper stated, they are attempting to start within (with employees) and work outward (investors, communities, media). One way Boise Cascade, Louisiana-Pacific and Georgia-Pacific encourage a participatory atmosphere is by recruiting employees from all levels to serve

on committees designed to improve safety, recognize achievement and further the overall goals of the company.

By forming these committees and providing methods of feedback and participation from all publics (town meetings, etc.), the five companies use public relations to contribute to the organic structure of the organizations. Reward systems are developed to recognize employees for even the smallest accomplishments like wearing a seat belt when driving company vehicles (personal communication, Nov. 20, 1997). Marcia Edwards, an employee at International Paper, said the following about the atmosphere and autonomy of International Paper in the September/October issue of *Unity Magazine*. "More of us feel like a valued part of the company and take more personal interest in the efforts and success of International Paper as outlined in the Agenda [a strategic plan]" (p. 5).

L. Grunig (1992) noted that an important role of the public relations practitioner is to organize information and perceptions to adapt to unstable or uncertain environments. She also refers to Kuhn (1975) and says that an organization can respond only to the environment or parts of the environment of which it is aware. According to those interviewed, the five companies are trying to learn more about the industry's publics, environments and constituencies and are forming partnerships and alliances with each other, government, environmentalists and communities to foster a more organic relationship with publics. Through research conducted by the AF&PA and individual research of publics, the companies are learning more about how others perceive the industry and the company itself and are working to change or improve those perceptions, because they realize consumer and public opinion affect the financial stability of the company and the industry. "I can tell you there are some shareholders who reach for the Environmental Report before they pick up the Financial Report. We know our stakeholders want both a clean, healthy environment and strong financial performance that improves shareholder

value," stated Creighton, Weyerhaeuser's former president in the Arkansas speech (<http://weyerhaeuser.com/corp/ark.htm>, November 9, 1997).

But what about the comment from Boise Cascade's practitioner that Boise Cascade does not target activist groups (p. 7, this report)? L. Grunig (1992) stated, "Clearly, public relations professionals in all types of organizations must develop and evaluate programs to deal more effectively with activists" (p. 479). Boise Cascade's practitioner offered that the company and activists are on completely different sides of the spectrum and that it is virtually impossible to reach an understanding, so efforts are concentrated elsewhere. She did hint, however, that the company *monitors* activist propaganda and corrects inaccurate statements about the company.

International Paper's communication team leader stated that communicating the underlying issues is complex for the forestry industry because new scientific findings often lose over the emotional appeals of environmentalists. He said that people don't always realize that forests are a natural, replenishable resource and that "International Paper focuses on how and why products come out of the forests because it's a better alternative to plastics" (personal communication, Nov. 11, 1997). He said this is why International Paper targets employees first and works outward. Georgia-Pacific, Louisiana-Pacific and Weyerhaeuser seem to follow suit because their web pages are geared to explaining the individual company's stance on environmental issues, safety and a variety of other hot-button issues. Louisiana-Pacific's web page is particularly effective because it offers an honest portrayal of what the company has faced and will face in the past and coming year. "Like virtually every forest products company, Louisiana-Pacific has just gone through a challenging economic year" and "while we have scrutinized our businesses and facilities, that job will never be completed," stated Suwyn, the company's CEO in a letter dated March 10, 1997 (<http://www.lpcorp.com/lptoday/letter.html>, November 17, 1997).

While the companies do not direct public relations or communication efforts at activist groups, they do have alliances with several environmental groups, as mentioned earlier in this paper. However, it is probably safe to say that altruistic programs and symmetrical communication practices of most of the companies are due in large part to pressures from activists, environmentalists, government and communities. It is definitely hinted at when the presidents and CEOs of the companies acknowledge that they are "listening" to publics now (refer to Creighton's comments on p. 4 and Suwyn's, p. 9). And it makes sense that Louisiana-Pacific's web page gives thorough explanation of goals since the company has only recently begun to respond symmetrically to publics.

Effects of Excellent Public Relations

The final level of J. Grunig's excellent public relations prescriptions deals with the effectiveness of the communication program and is determined by the ability of the program to meet objectives, reduce costs of regulation, pressure and litigation and the level of employee job satisfaction. While it is difficult to say *how* effective the communication plans of these companies are doing since each are in the relatively early stages of change, it is important to note that each company collects data from surveys and other research methods annually to track its progress and effectiveness. However, to determine the effectiveness or excellence of the public relations efforts according to J. Grunig's criteria, more research and surveys of all the publics including employees, stakeholders and other constituencies would have to be conducted.

The materials and web sites present a positive image of the companies and the industry. The companies approach controversial issues such as clearcutting and old-growth trees with tact and objectivity. International Paper even invites viewers of its home page to help the organization weigh possible solutions to environmental problems and allows the viewer to compare solutions with other previous viewers.

Louisiana-Pacific has settled several law suits in the past year, thus indicating that the new strategic plan must be effective (<http://www.lpcorp.com/lptoday/letter.html>, November 17, 1997). Weyerhaeuser's Creighton acknowledged in his speech that "short-term financial considerations test the depth of any company's environmental commitment" but that the responsible company believes responsibility makes good business sense and prevails in the long run (<http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/corp/ark.htm>, November 9, 1997).

Partnerships with various organizations and communities definitely help alleviate government pressure and regulation. All of the annual reports (especially sections geared to investors) combine the company's commitment to publics along side the commitment to reducing costs. "I think they recognize that spending a little more on training employees on safety, environmental issues and all tiers of operation will save them money in the long run. It'll prevent one more person from getting hurt, one less bill to pay and one less environmental issue to worry about," said Louisiana-Pacific's forester (personal communication, November 15, 1997).

It is also difficult to determine employee satisfaction without talking to a representative pool of employees from all levels of employment at each company. However, Louisiana-Pacific's forester, who interned at Boise Cascade as an undergraduate, believes that employees are generally satisfied with their jobs and that it is probably related to the awards systems in place. "You're given more responsibility and when you do something, you can see the difference you've made," he said. "At Boise, you might be given a dollar if the safety committee found you wearing a seatbelt and the safety committee is made up of fellow employees. It's the little things that seem nice." Former account manager at Georgia-Pacific said that the company has a similar practice and give out Butterfinger candy bars for employees who followed safety regulations (personal communication, November 20, 1997).

Discussion

David Dobbs, co-author of *The Northern Forest*, said, "I believe the forestry industry's approach to public relations has changed a lot over the years." He continued to say, "In the big companies and their major trade associations, you've got a trend of, 'Hey, we get it –we're doing it right now.' This after years of digging their heels" (personal communication, November 9, 1997). Dobbs, along with other environmentalists, acknowledge a change in the way the industry and big companies like the five studied here do business and communicate. Yet they remain skeptical that it may be just an illusion. The main question is, from both the company's perspective and that of concerned publics according to Dobbs is, "Are we really doing things right" and "are they just talking a good game right now?"

While many activists are skeptical about the more altruistic practices of the forestry industry, Kelly Andersson, contributing editor of *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*, says that "bad-mouthing" corporations is counterproductive. "Remember that without corporations we would have no public TV, no Sierra Club, no Nature Conservancy – and without them we'd have far fewer wild creatures out there in wild places"

(<http://www.vms.uoregon.edu/~boone/confront.html>, October 27, 1997).

This was a preliminary study to gauge the use of public relations and to conduct a baseline evaluation of the public relations programs of five large forest, wood and paper products companies. These companies were chosen because of the availability of information through web sites and university placement offices and because the environment they operate in is conducive to excellent public relations. L. Grunig (1992) explained how turbulent environments foster excellent public relations in the following passage.

Organizational theories show that organizations with dynamic, turbulent environments develop more flexible structures and more symmetrical public relations than those with static environments...Although activist groups present threats for organizations, they provide opportunity for public relations. Excellent public relations, that is, helps

organizations deal with activists – thus increasing the need for and the power of the communication department” (p. 503).

More research is needed to be able to generalize the findings in this study to the forestry industry as a whole but it offers a good insight as to how and why the major companies in the industry communicate with publics. Particularly, a larger study of forestry companies, both large and small and their targeted publics needs to be done.

From this study, however, it can be concluded that the five companies, Boise Cascade, Georgia-Pacific, Louisiana-Pacific, International Paper and Weyerhaeuser Corporation, are making great efforts to identify and communicate effectively with publics. While female employees are still underrepresented in senior management, none of the public relations practitioners interviewed believed that this was a trend specific to the forestry industry, but that it seemed representative of the manufacturing industry as a whole. Nor did they feel it was a reflection on the companies’ attitudes toward women.

As for J. Grunig’s other prescriptions, each company seems to be fulfilling Grunig’s criteria of excellent public relations (at least on paper) and are following strategic plans to develop relationships with various public and constituencies. While some are further along than others in the corporate change to more participatory, proactive and responsible business operations, time will only tell, as Dobbs suggested, whether the companies are truly interested in being good corporate citizens and responsible employers.

Characteristics of Excellent Public Relations Programs

I. Program Level

1. Managed strategically (chapters 6,7, 8)

II. Departmental Level

2. A single or integrated public relations department (chapter 14)
3. Separate function from marketing (chapter 13)
4. Direct reporting relationship to senior management (chapter 4)
5. Two-way symmetrical model (chapter 11)
6. Senior public relations person in the managerial role (chapters 10, 12)
7. Potential for excellent public relations as indicated by:
 - a. Knowledge of symmetrical model (chapters 2, 10, 11, 20)
 - b. Knowledge of managerial role (chapters 4, 10, 12)
 - c. Academic training in public relations (chapter 16)
 - d. Professionalism (chapter 16)
8. Equal opportunity for men and women in public relations (chapter 15)

III. Organizational Level

9. Worldview of public relations in the organization reflects the two-way symmetrical model (chapter 2).
10. Public relations director has power in or with the dominant coalition (chapter 18)
11. Participative rather than authoritarian organizational culture (chapters 21, 22)
12. Symmetrical system of internal communication (chapter 20)
13. Organic rather than mechanical organizational structure (chapter 17)
14. Turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups (chapter 17, 19)

IV. Effects of Excellent Public Relations

15. Programs meet communication objectives (chapter 7)
16. Reduces costs of regulation, pressure and litigation (chapter 19, 23)
17. Job satisfaction is high among employees (chapter 20)

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Running head: FESS UP OR STONEWALL? An Experimental Test

FESS UP OR STONEWALL?
An Experimental Test of Prior Reputation and Response Style
in the Face of Negative News Coverage

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FESS UP OR STONEWALL?**An Experimental Test of Prior Reputation and Response Style
in the Face of Negative News Coverage****Abstract**

A fully counterbalanced, within-subjects experiment addressed fundamental questions about the value of corporate reputation. The 2 (good vs. bad reputation) x 2 (apologetic vs. defensive) design also compared apologetic and defensive responses to negative news about a company. Reputation profoundly affected memory attitude and behavioral intentions, bearing out platitudes about bottom-line importance of reputation management. Conversely, response style was not particularly robust as a factor affecting cognitive, affective and behavioral measures. Interaction effects of the two factors ran counter to common wisdom abjuring the stonewall response. Corporations with a bad reputation prior to the negative news story in the experiment were further damaged by the apologetic response style. Measures taken after ten days delay supported the differential decay school of thinking about sleeper effects and confirmed the supposition that reputation can be thought of as a prior source cue about a company before subjects process the company's response to negative news.

FESS UP OR STONEWALL?
An Experimental Test of Prior Reputation and Response Style
in the Face of Negative News Coverage

Introduction

Trade Wisdom Prompts Questions

There seems to be strong conventional wisdom in public relations practice that reputation matters. This is evidenced by the frequent trade articles offering advice and input on reputation management (Caudron, 1997; Davenport, 1989; Gorman, 1989; Holmes, 1995; Kiechel, 1995; Kukaszewski, 1997; Patterson, 1993; Skolnik, 1994; Towers, 1993). It stands to reason that reputation is important, but in what ways and to what extent has less empirical support.

Some suggest that the best time to assess a company's reputation is during times of difficulty — nothing brings out the true corporate persona like the response to a crisis (Druckenmiller, 1993). Conventional wisdom dictates avoiding "no comment," and discouraging clients from taking a defensive position at all costs (Druckenmiller, 1993; Patterson, 1993). In fact, public apology in response to the accusation of corporate misconduct is often touted as one of the most important ways to protect a company's reputation (Lukaszewski, 1997).

Given the platitudes about leveling with the media, why does the phenomenon of lying, stonewalling and obfuscating in response to negative information persist? Why might organizations continue to use this approach, when public relations "gurus" and academics discourage this response type? Is response type unimportant, or perhaps simply overshadowed if one's preexisting reputation is good? And what happens to these attitudes in the long run?

These sorts of questions about the profound impact of reputation as well as the prescriptions for appropriate response to negative news prompted us to wonder just how significant reputation is as a factor and how it interacts with response type to negative news. To explore these issues, we formalized the following research questions.

RQ1: Does a negative news story have a stronger impact on subject evaluations of

corporations with an already damaged reputation? Does a negative story about a company with a good reputation cause lower credibility of the negative information?

RQ 2: Which is more effective in combating negative information in a news story, an apologetic or a defensive approach?

RQ 3: How durable are the effects of response style (apologetic or defensive) in relation to reputation (good or bad) over an extended period of time? What are the long-term attitudes regarding the different variables tested? Are they consistent with the initial attitudes formed after the message response?

Literature Review

Reputation Management Literature

It has been said that by the year 2000, reputation management may be the "dominant force" in public relations (Patterson, 1993). In today's consumer oriented world where everything is seen as a commodity, a company's reputation can be the key distinction between prices, technologies and product capabilities (Druckenmiller, 1993; Caudron, 1997). "Reputation can be a company's most powerful asset -- or its costliest liability," said Alan Towers, president of the public relations firm Alan Towers Associates. Experts agree, however, that reputations are abstract, subjective personal judgments, the origin of which is hard to pin down (Budd, 1997). On the one hand, the bottom line business implications of a strong reputation have prompted some scholarly work on reputation management. On the other hand, the nebulous nature of "reputation" has caused uncertainty and some disagreement about the effects of reputation.

Within the past decade, business and management scholars have developed a formalizing idea that a firm's reputation is an asset vital to the future economic success of an organization (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988). The notion that bottom line financial success is linked with corporate reputation has been studied, often using the *Fortune* Most Admired list as the sample for the financial data. These studies indicate variables such as above average financial returns for a firm, quality of job candidates, and initial decisions about pursuing contact with a company all hinge at least partly on corporate reputation (Hammond & Slocum, 1996; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990;

Fryxell & Wang, 1994).

However, lack of a widely accepted measure for reputation has created difficulty in replicating the findings of others (Hammond & Slocum, 1996). Additionally, research suggests that simply using dimensions and scales that describe individuals cannot accurately capture our perceptions about organizational reputation. Attributes describing an individual such as expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness translate to "smart organization," "role model" and "good organization" when measuring corporate image and prior performance (Raman & Haley, 1997).

Mass communication experts concur that the elusive concept of corporate image or reputation has caused confusion about how to define and measure it, and that devices traditionally used to measure brand image do not successfully capture corporate image or reputation (Budd, 1994-5; Headrich, 1993; Moffitt, 1994).

From a public relations standpoint, a positive reputation allows a company not only to implement its present plans, but also to pursue its goals in the future. This has been described as the "halo effect" — where "a generally positive attitude toward the company lends the company immunity to a certain extent" (Bromley, 1993; Haedrich, 1993). Goldberg and Hartwick (1990) found evidence of this in an experiment investigating the combined effects of a company's reputation and advertisements on product evaluations. Subjects who formed a negative evaluation of the company based on a bad reputation found the advertisements less credible and rated the products less favorably than those who received a positive reputation company.

This would indicate that by defining a valid and reliable method of evaluating reputation, companies could not only help protect the "bottom line," they could also help ensure a more mutually supportive relationship between an organization and its publics (Bromley, 1993).

Because each day, management teams across America gather to implement reputation damage control due to negative publicity, the effect of unfavorable media coverage plays an important role in establishing corporate strategy to maintain positive reputations (Young, 1995-6). In fact, research shows that negative information can have a powerful impact on attitudes and behavioral intentions. It has been shown that a single item of negative information can neutralize

five pieces of positive information, and that negative information is more enduring than positive or neutral information (Richey, Koenigs, Richey & Fortin, 1975; Richins, 1983). In the long term, negative publicity may more strongly influence attitudes and behavioral intentions than positive information (Weinberger & Dillon, 1980). Some suggest the reason for this influence is the surprise factor, while others claim it may be that negative information is seen as less ambiguous (Mizerski, 1982).

Most every organization will receive unfavorable coverage at some point. So, it is important that the organization receive knowledgeable counsel on how to address the problems and formulate the most effective response. While the primary focus should be on affecting positive organizational behavior, some type of response will still be required and it is essential for public relations scholars to develop the best response strategy to combat negative publicity and still maintain a positive reputation.

Response strategy

If reputation is well established before negative publicity strikes, the effects of corporate response strategy may decay in the long run. Miller and Campbell (1959) found that when two sides of an argument were presented, the side learned last would be better recalled immediately, but this superiority effect would gradually decrease. This effect was also predicted with attitude change because of the assumed relation between message retention and attitude. This suggests that the power of preexisting reputation may ultimately override the carefully planned public relations response strategies. Individuals may respond more favorably toward a corporation that is willing to "own up" to its mistakes. But, if this favorable reaction is not durable over time, perhaps the apologetic response will only be washed out by corporate reputation. This can be tested by recall of the negative information, attitudinal assessment of the organization and behavior intention in the short and long term.

In rhetoric and speech communication literature, apologia is considered an effective self defense strategy, appropriate when individuals must defend their character (Kruse, 1981; Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Empirical research suggests, however, that an apologetic response strategy can

be effective in some cases but not in others (Coombs, 1995; Coombs and Holladay, 1996; Hearit, 1997; Sherrell and Reidenbach, 1986). Nevertheless, public relations practitioners have since drawn upon this rhetorical strategy as the best way to respond to negative publicity with an internal locus of responsibility (Coombs, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Specifically, crisis management specialists have suggested there are five possible response types to negative or crisis situations: denial, distance, ingratiation, mortification, and suffering. Of these, experts suggest the mortification strategy when the negative information results from an internal, intentional action taken by an organization that places publics at risk or harm (Coombs, 1995). Mortification strategies must first acknowledge responsibility for the negative information, then the organization seeks to redress the problem in some manner (apology, compensation, etc.) (Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Like apologia, the stonewall concept also has roots in rhetoric/speech communication. While silence can be considered a rhetorical strategy, experts claim it likely implies passivity and a relinquished control over the situation. This response type can create or add to existing doubts and uncertainty and has been deemed a "public relations" issue that simply reinforces the public's negative impressions (Brummett, 1980). While some public relations scholars suggest a "transcendence" response, where the company tries to place the negative information in a different, more desirable context, stonewalling has not been empirically tested as a possible response type to negative publicity (Hearit, 1997). Instead, anecdotal examples such as Ford Motor Company's use of delaying and stonewalling facts with its Pinto are cited as examples of the futility of this approach (Sherrell & Reidenbach, 1986).

The structural guidelines on how to respond to such situations often assume, however, that the media coverage is disseminated upon a *tabula rasa* public and does not take into account the context or reputation of the organization. In order to fully comprehend the impact negative information has upon an organization, we must not view response as a snapshot or cross section. Taking a reflexive orientation, reputation is an ongoing index of previous responses to situations, making the most immediate response strategy a key element of that index, but also a response that

should be made in light of current reputation. The interaction of reputation and response may be such that traditional strategies do not apply in all cases and certainly calls into question pat answers or formulaic principles such as: "Always Apologize" or "Never Say No Comment."

Durability of Effects of Reputation and Response

Source credibility and memory. Cameron and colleagues have reviewed and adapted nearly 50 years of sleeper effects literature to current public relations theory and issues in the profession (Cameron, 1994; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; D. L. Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 1989). Source credibility studies starting with Hovland have included memory for message as a dependent variable, with higher source credibility contributing to better memory which in turn can contribute to attitude change (Fishbein, 1967; Greenwald, 1968; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield, 1949; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McGuire, 1964; Miller & Campbell, 1959; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981).

Cook and Flay concluded from a review of over 25 studies of the role of memory in attitude change that it "seems unlikely that retention of message details and delayed attitude are related in any simple way, though they may be related in complex ways" (Cook & Flay, 1978, p. 23). They stated that although "the evidence is equivocal, there are indications of a causal relationship, and it would be premature to suggest that persistence is not at all related to the retention of broader details of a persuasive communication" (p. 25). Miller & Campbell (1959), Wilson & Miller (1968), Gruder, Cook, Hennigan, Flay, Alessis & Halamaj (1979) and Ronis (1980) found just such a relationship between retention of messages and attitude formation and persistence.

Timing of source notification (before or after message) particularly influences the effect of source on audiences (Homer & Kahle, 1990; Insko, 1964; O'Keefe, 1987; Sternthal, Phillips & Dholakia, 1978). O'Keefe's meta-analysis (1987) suggested that more than a simple association of a credible source with a persuasive position must occur, otherwise timing of source notification would not be a significant factor. This view gained further support from Pratkanis, Greenwald, Leippe, and Baumgardner in 1988 as well as Homer and Kahle (1990). Timing of source

notification before or after a message affected memory for the message and for the source, as well as affecting persuasive impacts. For the current study, corporation reputation reifies credibility of the source responding to negative news. In sum, the prior source cue here is the corporation's reputation. The implication of prior notification was summarized by Cameron (1994):

When a source cue is given after a message, encoding processes are already done, with additional traces laid down in memory for source information found at the end of the message. With prior source attribution, encoding is influenced by the credibility of the source. Prior source attribution leads to integration of source with message. When a source has lower credibility, the message is accorded less credence and less effortful elaboration in memory occurs (i.e. poorer memory for the message).

Durability of source effects. The persuasion literature includes considerable attention to the durability of source credibility effects. In the current study, durability of source effects are integral to the purported effects of reputation on subsequent processing of information about the source. If reputation is not durable, then it does not affect later processing of messages about the organization.

Most of the work on the interaction of time and source conditions has involved the search for and explication of some variant of the sleeper effect, beginning with the idea that forgetting the source (Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield, 1949) releases deleterious effects of low source credibility, resulting in an absolute increase in persuasive impact for the low credibility message.

When it was found that source was remembered, the dissociation hypothesis was developed (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Weiss, 1953). Failure to consistently find an absolute sleeper effect represented by a rise in persuasive impact over time (Chaiken, 1980; Capon & Hulbert, 1973; Maddux & Rogers, 1980; Whittaker & Meade, 1968) called into question the robustness of the sleeper effect. Gruder et al (1978) found absolute sleeper effects, but specified certain conditions necessary for obtaining the effect.

Gillig & Greenwald (1974) found more evidence for a relative sleeper effect. The relative sleeper effect occurs when a low credibility source has less initial impact than a high credibility source, but experiences less decay of impact over time than does the high credibility source (Cook, Gruder, Hennigan & Flay, 1979). Pratkanis et al (1988) repeatedly found a relative sleeper effect

and offered a replacement for the dissociation hypothesis -- the differential decay hypothesis that:

subjects remember the communication events (episodes), but the impact of the communication (on evaluation) decays over time. This assumption is made in the differential decay interpretation. Thus, it is not the dissociation of events in memory but a differential dissipation of the impact of two different persuasive communications. This is consistent with the notion of two separate memory systems (Tulving, 1983): one for episodes or events (i.e., I heard a message and cue) and one for meaning (i.e., I favor X). (p. 216)

With the present study, reputation could be considered a prior source cue, therefore a predicted sleeper effect for persuasive impact would probably not be found.

According to the differential decay interpretation, a sleeper effect is not likely to occur when discounting information precedes the message. In such cases, subjects may be more disposed to counterargue with the message as they read. Thus, the persuasive impact of the message is attenuated, and the message and source are more likely to form a unit in memory. (Pratkanis et al, 1988, p.215)

With prior cuing for source, the message and source cue "can be interpreted only in light of the other" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, p. 92). In considering reputation (i.e. source cue) and response style in the face of negative news (persuasive message), reputation and response intermingle as the story is processed.

Cognitive effects and public relations practice. The brief review above indicates that message retention plays an important role in source credibility research, both as the focus of studies and in the relationship of retention to attitude change and persistence. Of equal importance, message retention is recognized as a very important dependent measure relevant to both the theory and practice of public relations (Broom & Dozier, 1990, p. 36).

Grunig has offered several reasons for the study of cognitive effects in public relations research. In an age recognizing moderate effects (McQuail, 1984) for mediated communication, cognitive effects take on importance in setting realistic public relations objectives (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, Chap. 6). Grunig's situational theory offers a second rationale for attending to cognitive effects. Causal path analysis of research using the situational theory suggested that active publics may arise through information gain, when information leads to problem recognition and then involvement with an issue (Grunig & Childers, 1988).

Perhaps the most compelling and current reason for examining cognitive effects pertains to

the symmetrical model of public relations. In the symmetrical model, persuasion and attitude change are supplanted by an emphasis on negotiation. Imparting of information as part of an exchange leading to accommodation of an organization to its publics makes message retention and other cognitive effects highly pertinent (Grunig et al., 1992, p. 174-175).

For several specialties in public relations, information gain is usually the paramount objective. Public information officers often seek to impart information without an explicit intent to change attitudes. And some proponents of integrated or mega-marketing take a fairly restricted view of public relations as conditioning the market. This is done by providing information about a product, company, issue or economic philosophy, with more persuasive efforts reserved for other elements of the marketing program (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1989).

Veridicality and public relations. Slater and Rouner (1996) have suggested that some information is perceived as having a higher truth value, or veridicality than other information. Some conditions, such as a powerful preexisting reputation, may cause an individual to discount or give less credence to a message if it is deemed less veridical. It has been predicted that high source credibility is more veridical and will result in higher truth value toward a message. However, it has not been tested whether this is true with negative information about a company with a strong/positive reputation. When negative information is received about a company with a good reputation, perhaps individuals subject the message to a veridicality test and denigrate the information as less credible. The durability of attitudes formed under these conditions is an important factor in understanding long-term implications for reputation management and response strategies.

Hypotheses

In today's public relations world, many of the messages disseminated by PR practitioners do not pass through a news media filter. Web pages, direct mail, advertorial inserts, and corporate magazines are just a few examples of controlled communication on the rise in the field. If we can test and fine tune the effectiveness of such messages, then public relations professionals have the opportunity to determine whether the conventional wisdom about the importance of reputation is

merited. If so, we can then use that information to better shape and counsel management to achieve a better corporate reputation. One of the strengths of experimental design is that it enables us to sort out theoretical issues and isolate the fundamental effects of reputation and response type. The following hypotheses attempt to address both theory and practice.

To assess the effect of a good reputation on memory, attitude, and behavioral intentions over time, the following three hypotheses were developed.

H1: Memory for information about companies with bad reputations will be better than memory for companies with good reputations.

H2: Attitudes toward companies with good reputations will be better than attitudes toward companies with bad reputations.

H3: Intended purchasing and investing behaviors will be more favorable for companies with good reputations than for companies with bad reputations.

To assess the effect of an apologetic versus defensive response type on memory, attitude, and behavioral intentions over time, the following three hypotheses were developed.

H4: Memory for companies using a defensive response in a news story will be better than memory for companies using an apologetic response.

H5: Attitudes toward companies using an apologetic response in a news story will be better than attitudes toward companies using a defensive response.

H6: Intended purchasing and investing behaviors will be more favorable toward companies using an apologetic response in a news story than for companies using a defensive response.

The interplay of reputation and most recent response to negative information was addressed in Hypothesis 7.

H7: Reputation and response type interact such that the combination of bad reputation and defensive response is markedly different from any other combinations of the two variables.

Because durability of effect has practical implications and also serves to explore the concept of a sleeper effect, the following two hypotheses were developed.

H8: Memory for information about companies will decay after approximately one week, but because reputation is a prior cue, no differential decay associated with a sleeper effect will be found.

H9: Attitude and intention to behave will regress toward the mean after approximately one week, but because reputation is prior, neither an absolute nor even a relative sleeper effect will occur.

Method

Participants

Seventy three subjects in two administrations (student and non-student adults) participated in both the initial and follow up sessions of the study. In the first group, thirty-six undergraduate students (20 women and 16 men) from a large, public southeastern university volunteered to participate in this study. Each student was offered two points extra credit on a test in a large introductory level mass communication class. This group constitutes the first group to participate in the study. Volunteers were treated in accordance with the Institutional Review Board Code of Conduct.

In the second group, thirty-seven non-student adults (24 women and 13 men) were recruited from the community (a mid-sized southeastern city) using a random digit dialing protocol. Each participant was paid \$40 for complete participation in the initial and follow up phases of the study.

Design

A 2 x 2 within-subjects design was employed, meaning that each subject received each of the conditions for each of the two variables. The design controls for individual differences in this way, thereby greatly increasing the sensitivity of the measurements. The first factor was reputation (good vs. bad). The second factor was response style (apologetic vs. defensive). A complete counterbalance was used to randomly distribute variables such as company names, bad news stories, good or bad reputation, and apologetic or defensive response to the negative news.

Stimulus Materials

Four fictitious news stories were written by a journalism graduate student with extensive newswriting experience. Then, for each story, two versions were crafted. One, where a principal of the company issued a defensive response to the negative information; and one where a principal of the company issued an apologetic response to the negative information. In all, there were then eight stories. Each story was about a different clothing company responding to negative publicity (e.g. a toxic spill into a river, sexual harassment claims, etc.). Stories were written in news wire style. Each story was independently reviewed to ensure for clarity and consistency of style. (See Appendix A for a sample of the stories)

Four fictitious reputational paragraphs were also written (one to accompany each news story). Two of the paragraphs were about a company with a good reputation; two were about a company with a poor reputation. (See Appendix A for a sample of the reputational paragraphs)

Two questionnaires were drafted. The first was a simple one-page questionnaire, asking subjects for unaided recall of the central point and all details about the story that was just read. The questionnaire also asked subjects to rate the various news writing styles of the story they had just completed.

The second questionnaire contained a battery of questions about the (4) stories subjects were asked to read in the form of matching, true/false, and semantic differential scale questions. This questionnaire was five pages long.

Packets were assembled for each participant, containing an Institutional Review Board approved consent form, four reputational paragraphs, wire stories, and one-page reaction questionnaires. At the end of each packet was the five-page, detailed questionnaire. Each subject received a random selection of (1) story topics; (2) company names (3) corporate response to the negative information in the story, and (4) reputational type.

Procedure

As mentioned, the student participants all volunteered to participate through a sign-up sheet in an introductory mass communication class. The non-student participants were selected using

random interval selection from the local telephone book. The University's Survey Research Center was hired to screen and recruit the participants for the study, after approval from the University's Institutional Review Board. This group was the second group to participate in the study.

Testing for each group occurred in two sessions, one week apart. In the first session, subjects were asked to read the packet assigned to them and answer the questionnaires described in the stimulus materials section.

In the second testing session, subjects were asked to complete the same questionnaires given in the first session, without the news stories or reputational paragraphs to reread. This was done one week after the first session. Because of on-campus availability, the student group was asked to return to the research room where the first session was conducted to fill out the second questionnaire. The non-student group, however, conducted this second session over the telephone, answering the questions orally. Both groups received a debriefing after completion of the second questionnaire.

Dependent Measures

The questionnaires were written with three main criteria in mind: immediate and delayed memory performance, attitude formation and change, and behavioral intentions in the short and long term. These were measured in the following ways. Memory performance includes total as well as the subset of accurate details recalled about the company and the news story, unaided recall of the central point of the news story, and matching questions where subjects were asked to match the company name with the story topic.

Attitude for the companies was measured using semantic differential scales which asked the subjects to assess how prosocial and typical each company was. True/false style questions also asked whether the subject liked each company's ethical standards and management styles.

Subjects' intention to behave was measured using semantic differential scales, which asked the likelihood of investing in each company and the likelihood that the company's actions would affect purchasing behavior.

Results

Subject Comparisons

To examine possible differences between student and non-student subjects, independent t-test statistics were run for the measures to assess the manipulation of reputation and response, as well as measures of memory, attitude and behavioral intention of the subjects. Significant differences were found in only three instances, in spite of the likelihood of more instances due to listwise error when 30 t-tests are done.

Two of the significant differences as a function of student status occurred with manipulations checks. The tests determined whether subjects recognized the type of response (apologetic or defensive) and the level of reputation (good or bad). Students performed better in the matching task for memory of the news story in immediate test of subjects (students 3.72, non-students 3.24, $t=4.52$, $df\ 251.76$, $p=.000$). Non students performed better in the true/false, recognition of the apologetic response type in the news stories in the immediate test of subjects. Performance was significantly different for stories employing the apologetic response strategy (students .71, non-students .85; $t=-3.01$, $df\ 268.58$ $p=.003$.)

The other significant difference pertained to the hypotheses in the experiment. Overall, the non-student adults expressed greater likelihood to purchase across all conditions of reputation and response in immediate test of subjects.

With overall possibility of significant difference in each of the 30 t-tests run to compare students and non-students, the fact that only three were found suggests the comparability of the student and non-student groups. Additionally, each group performed better on one of the many manipulations, with neither group showing consistently better performance in the measures tested. In each of the three cases where a significant difference was noted for the immediate test of subjects, there was no significant difference in the delayed test for these measures. In light of the very limited and balanced differences in performance between the two groups, all subsequent analysis used the combined data set.

Manipulation Checks

To ascertain whether the experimental manipulations were effective, the following tests were run. Responses were manipulated using either apologetic or defensive versions of the news stories. Subjects were asked to rate, using a semantic differential scale, whether each company's response to the news story was apologetic or defensive (apologetic=1 defensive=7). Using an independent samples t-test, a significant difference was found between the apologetic and defensive responses in both the immediate and delayed tests (Immediate -- apologetic 4.48, defensive 3.24, $t=5.35$, $df\ 286.84$, $p=.000$) (Delayed -- apologetic 4.27, defensive 3.48, $t=3.54$, $df\ 279.33$, $p=.000$).

Reputation was manipulated using either good or bad versions of background information about companies accompanying each news story. Subjects were asked to rate, using a semantic differential scale, whether each company's reputation prior to the news story was excellent or poor (excellent = 1 poor = 7). Using an independent samples t-test, a significant difference was found between the good and bad reputations in both the immediate and delayed tests (Immediate -- good reputation 5.54, bad reputation 2.97, $t=12.68$, $df\ 286.64$, $p=.000$) (Delayed -- good reputation 4.95, bad reputation 3.46, $t=7.40$, $df\ 283.57$, $p=.000$)

To assure that the particulars of the stimulus materials did not contain reactive elements, a Oneway ANOVA was used for company name and story type. No significant differences were found among any of the dependent measures as a function of company name (the four names of clothing companies used were: International Female, Cricket, Bodywear, and Rustler). For story type, only four of a possible 30 comparisons were significant. Furthermore, no pattern of reaction to a particular story was found; i.e. the significant differences as a function of story type involved different stories in the four instances.

Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1 stated that memory for information about companies with bad reputations will be better than memory for companies with good reputations. Because each subject was exposed to both conditions for reputation, the effect of reputation on memory performance was evaluated

using repeated measure, MANOVA. Throughout the experiment, MANOVA enabled isolation of the relative effect of reputation on memory performance for subjects by controlling through the experimental design for individual differences of the subjects¹ (see Table 1).

As a function of reputation, memory performance measured by recall of total details from stories, accurate recall of details from stories, identification of the central point of the story, and matching of story topic with company name were all non-significant.

Hypothesis 2 stated that attitudes toward companies with a good reputation will be better than attitudes toward companies with a bad reputation. As a function of reputation, attitude was measured by the semantic differential scales asking subjects if the companies were prosocial or; and if the companies were typical or atypical. A significant difference was found in the measurement of the company's prosocial stance $F(1,59) = 1.33, p=.000$. Subjects indicated that companies with a good reputation were more prosocial than were companies with a bad reputation. No significant difference was found as a function of reputation for the measurement of the company's typical behavior.

True/false questions were used to measure attitude asking whether participants: liked the company's management styles and liked the company's ethical standards. Significant differences were found in response to both questions as a function of reputation (management styles -- $F(1, 59) = .35, p=.001$; and ethical standards -- $F(1,58) = .33, p=.000$. Subjects were more inclined to like the management styles and ethical standards of companies with good reputations than they were for companies with bad reputations.

Hypothesis 3 stated that intended purchasing and investing behaviors will be more favorable for companies with good reputations than for companies with bad reputations. As a

¹ This design welcomes all of the various and naturally occurring differences between individuals (involvement, intelligence, gender, alertness, etc.), because this suggests that significant effects are quite robust. Good reputation may raise already high ratings offered by an involved and sympathetic respondent, while also raising ratings for indifferent subjects with lower scores overall. The relationship between good reputation and higher ratings holds across all sorts of audience members.

function of reputation, behavioral intent was measured by subjects' indication on a semantic differential scale of: the likelihood that purchasing behaviors would be affected and the likelihood of investing with the company. Subjects indicated they were significantly more likely to invest in an organization with a good reputation than with a bad reputation $F(1,61) = 5.55, p = .000$. As a function of reputation, likelihood that purchasing behavior would be affected was non-significant.

Hypothesis 4 stated that memory for companies using a defensive response in a news story will be better than memory for companies using an apologetic response. Because each subject was exposed to both response types, the effect of response on memory performance was evaluated using repeated measure, MANOVA. This enabled isolation of the relative effect of response on memory performance for subjects, controlling for individual differences of the subjects.

As a function of reputation, memory performance measured by recall of total details from the stories, accurate recall of details from the stories, identification of the central point of the stories, and matching of the story topic with the company name were all non-significant.

Hypothesis 5 stated that attitudes toward companies using an apologetic response in a news story will be better than attitudes toward companies using a defensive response. As a function of response, attitude measures of the companies' management styles, prosocial standing, and typical behavior were all non-significant.

Hypothesis 6 stated that intended purchasing and investing behaviors will be more favorable toward companies using an apologetic response in a news story than for companies using a defensive response. As a function of response, behavioral intent was measured by likelihood that purchasing behavior would be affected and likelihood of investment with each company. Differences between response types were non-significant for these measures.

Hypothesis 7 stated that reputation and response type interact such that the combination of bad reputation and defensive response is markedly different from any other combinations of the two variables. The only significant difference found for reputation as a function of response was for the subjects' likelihood to invest. Subjects said they were least likely to invest in companies with an already poor reputation that responded apologetically. However, subjects indicated they

were most inclined to invest in a company with a good reputation that responded apologetically $F(1,61) = 4.64, p = .017$.

Hypothesis 8 stated that memory for information about companies will decay after approximately one week. This hypothesis was supported by memory performance measured by recall of total details from stories, accurate recall of details from stories, identification of the central point of the stories, and matching of the story topic with the company name. One week after subjects completed the first questionnaire, they recalled significantly fewer total details about the stories than immediately after reading the stories $F(1,34) = 6.71, p = .008$. Subjects also recalled significantly fewer accurate details about the stories after a one-week delay $F(1,43) = 7.60, p = .000$. Subjects' ability to recall the central point of the story was significantly less after the one-week delay $F(1,29) = .23, p = .000$. After the delay, participants were also significantly less likely to correctly match the company name with the story topic they had been given $F(1,62) = .26, p = .000$.

Hypothesis 9 stated that attitude and intention to behave will regress toward the mean after approximately one week. As a function of delay, this was measured by subjects' indication of: whether the companies were prosocial or antisocial, if the companies were typical or atypical, the likelihood the company's behavior would affect their purchasing behaviors, and the likelihood of investing with this company. Subjects' ratings of the companies as prosocial or antisocial did significantly regress toward the mean after the one week delay $F(1, 59) = 1.33, p = .017$. No other significant differences were found.

Discussion

Hypothesis Tests

Hypotheses 1 and 4 stated that memory for information about companies would be affected by the company's reputation and response type. These hypotheses were not supported. Subjects abilities to recall both raw and accurate details about the stories, to identify the central points of the stories, and to match the stories with the topics were not affected by the response type or the

reputation of the organizations.

Reputation did, however, affect subjects' attitudes toward the companies. Not surprisingly, companies with a strong reputation were seen as more prosocial. Subjects also preferred the ethical standards and management styles of good reputation companies. These results support hypothesis 2. It was hypothesized (H5) that the apologetic style of response in the negative news story would also have significant positive effects on attitude. However, subjects did not view companies that gave an apologetic response type as more prosocial. Subjects also did not prefer the management styles or ethical standards of companies that issued an apologetic response.

This is true even though it was shown subjects could accurately recall both the reputation and response type for each organization. Hypothesis 5, stating that attitudes toward a company using an apologetic response would be better than a defensive response, was not supported. This indicates the power of reputation in comparison to response type. Subjects generally favored companies with a good reputation -- regardless of whether the organization apologized or reacted defensively to the negative information.

It should be noted that one measure of attitude, whether the company was considered typical or atypical, produced no significant results. This may be because the measure lacked valence. That is, subjects who held favorable attitudes about an organization may mark that company as "atypical." Conversely, subjects who held unfavorable attitudes about a company could also consider the company "atypical."

Hypotheses 3 and 6 stated that reputation and response type would affect subjects' behavioral intent. Lack of valence in the measurement may also have been a factor for behavioral intent questions. As a measure of likelihood that purchasing behavior would be affected, subjects may have interpreted this question idiosyncratically due to a lack of valence. The question asked, "How likely is it that this company's actions would affect your purchasing behavior?" It appeared that some subjects who felt favorably toward the organization responded "very likely" to this measure -- whereas others who felt very unfavorably also responded "very likely" to this measure.

This may be the reason there were no significant results produced from this question.

Subjects did indicate, however, that they were more likely to invest in an organization with a good reputation than with a bad reputation. In keeping with the results of the attitudinal measures, response type had no effect on subjects' likelihood to invest. That subjects were more likely to invest in good reputation companies coincides with the fact that subjects also had more favorable attitudes about these companies -- again, this is true regardless of whether the organization issued an apologetic or defensive response. Hypothesis 3, then was partially supported, while hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Hypothesis 7 stated that reputation and response type interact such that the combination of bad reputation and defensive response would be markedly different from any other combinations of the two variables. As we have seen up until this point, prior reputation of a company can have a noticeable effect on attitudes and intended investing behaviors, while response type does not seem to matter.

However, when asked to indicate how defensive an organization was in response to the negative information, significant differences were found both as a function of response and reputation. Conversely, subjects did not link response type to the evaluation of the company's reputation. That is, in evaluation of the reputation of the company, no significant difference was found as a function of response type. This indicates that, while subjects could correctly link the response type to the story, they seem to confound reputation with response. There was a main effect for reputation, showing up in a measure intended to check for the manipulation of response. Reputation appears to be a powerful force in subsequent judgments about the company -- subjects may make unfounded attributions about other aspects of the organization based on reputation. This includes attributing a response type as a function of reputation.

Another powerful implication found from results to hypothesis 7 is that subjects' likelihood to invest hinges on reputation as a function of response. Subjects were significantly less likely to invest in companies with an already poor reputation that responded apologetically. However, they were most inclined to invest in a company with a good reputation that responded apologetically.

The apologetic response to negative information has drastically different results, depending on one's preexisting reputation. For companies with a bad reputation, it appears that an apologetic response only makes matters worse. However -- consistent with conventional wisdom -- an apologetic response to negative information appears to reinstate the organization in good graces if their reputation was strong to begin with. This "damned if you do -- saved if you do" paradox reemphasizes the importance of a precise understanding of one's current reputation (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 8, which stated that memory for information about the companies would decay after one week, was supported. As expected, subjects were less able to recall the specifics of the stories and were less able to correctly identify the company name with the story type. Although this finding was not a surprise, it is an important finding when measuring the durability of the effects. In this study, it was important to measure the attitudes and behavioral intentions after subjects were less able to recall the specifics of the stories. In the "real world," we aren't normally asked to make evaluative decisions about organizations immediately after reading the newspaper or watching the news -- instead these questions may arise a day, week, or months after one is exposed to the negative publicity.

Hypothesis 9 stated that attitude and behavioral intention would regress toward the mean after approximately one week. This hypothesis was partially supported. Over time, subjects' assessments of how prosocial a company was did significantly regress toward the mean. Also, subjects ratings of the companies' reputations significantly regressed toward the mean as a function of delay by reputation. After a week, significant differences still existed, showing that subjects could accurately rate the good and bad reputation companies. However, good reputation companies were not rated quite as good (means regressed from 5.77 to 4.93) and bad reputation companies were not seen as quite as bad (means regressed from 2.98 to 3.5). This is likely another indication that, as time passes, the strength and accuracy of our judgments become weaker and more nebulous.

Practical Implications

In addition to testing the aforementioned hypotheses, this study sought to develop a valid

and reliable research tool that would enable public relations practitioners to determine the "reputation" of a company. It also sought to develop a valid, reliable and usable experimental protocol for message testing in public relations. As a result of this study, several strengths and weaknesses for using such a methodology have emerged. Using memory, attitudinal and behavior intent as the dependent measures for this experiment have proven useful in determining a comprehensive understanding of the subjects' short and long term reactions to the companies. Subjects' assessments of the companies reputations and response types were generally valid and reliable. However, as in most social science research, hindsight reveals several areas for improvement should practitioners attempt to employ a "reputation audit" using this experimental design.

As mentioned, valence was not included for two questions in the experiment -- one measuring attitude, the other measuring behavioral intent. This should be an important consideration in the structure of each item on future questionnaires, so as not to confound responses.

Also, results of this study indicate that the appropriate response type to negative information may hinge on the company's preexisting reputation. This stresses the need for a "reputation audit" measurement tool. Such a service could be an important part of the research program offered to major clients by agencies. However, it also indicates that a few more questions may be necessary to understand why subjects felt less favorable toward bad reputation companies with an apologetic response type. Perhaps subjects find an organization with a poor reputation less credible or sincere when it issues an apology. Likewise, a company that has proven to be a shining star of social responsibility is afforded the benefit of the doubt in a time of crisis -- and a public apology might reinforce the view as a good corporate citizen. Further study of why subjects appreciate the apologetic response type from companies with a good reputation but frown upon apologetic companies with a bad reputation is in order. Measures of the companies' sincerity and credibility should be added to the questionnaire -- both for immediate and long-term effects -- to sort out a possible "hypocrisy factor" at work.

Conclusions

As controlled messages become more common in the field of public relations, the experimental methodology used in this study will become increasingly important in testing and understanding the effects of messages distributed under the control of the public relations practitioner. The prototype used in this study allows public relations practitioners to adopt copy testing methods with a focus on targeted messages in public relations. The method used in this study shows promise as a tool to evaluate reputation and message testing. Future use of this method should include valence in all individual measurements. Additionally, measurement of message credibility and company sincerity should be included in evaluations of the response type to better determine *why* the best response type may depend on the existing reputation. The dependent measures of memory, attitude, and behavioral intent provide a solid and comprehensive understanding of short and long term effects of the corporate reputations and responses.

Results of this study show the powerful effect reputation has on both attitude and behavioral intent. Even though subjects were able to accurately recall both the reputation and response type in the short and long term, subjects were more inclined to use reputation as the predictor of attitude and behavioral intent. This may provide some research-based insight to the conventional wisdom addressed in this study: Why might organizations continue to react defensively in response to negative information when it is traditionally discouraged as a response type? It appears that if an organization is operating with a good reputation, response type to negative information may not have the powerful damaging effect traditionally thought. In fact, this study indicates that there are some situations when one's reputation is such that a defensive response type might even be more effective in the long-term.

Of course this is a cyclic dilemma, and it is possible that continued lying, obfuscating, and stonewalling could lead to an even worse reputation over time. Notably, this study shows that we hold less favorable attitudes and are less likely to invest in organizations with a bad reputation, linking reputation to bottom line considerations for all companies.

If so much of our attitude and behavior toward an organization depends on reputation, then an accurate reputational measurement is essential to conduct a *reputational audit*. It is likely that organizations all too often operate on the assumption of a strong reputation, without any reliable proof. This might metaphorically resemble a slow boiling crisis, where retroactively executing the wrong response type could be too little too late. A reputational audit measurement would provide companies with a valid and reliable tool, that could be used to plan the most effective response type for that individual organization *before* a crisis occurs.

This study also shows that, using naturalistic stimulus materials, individuals are able to accurately discern: a good from a bad reputation, an apologetic from a defensive response. This manipulation check reinforces the existing belief that our efforts to shape reputation, and craft individual response types do matter in the short and long term.

In order to most effectively counsel clients, public relations practitioners must have a solid grasp of reputation evaluation and management. In the field of public relations, an accurate measurement tool such as this is essential in order to provide counsel that won't backfire.

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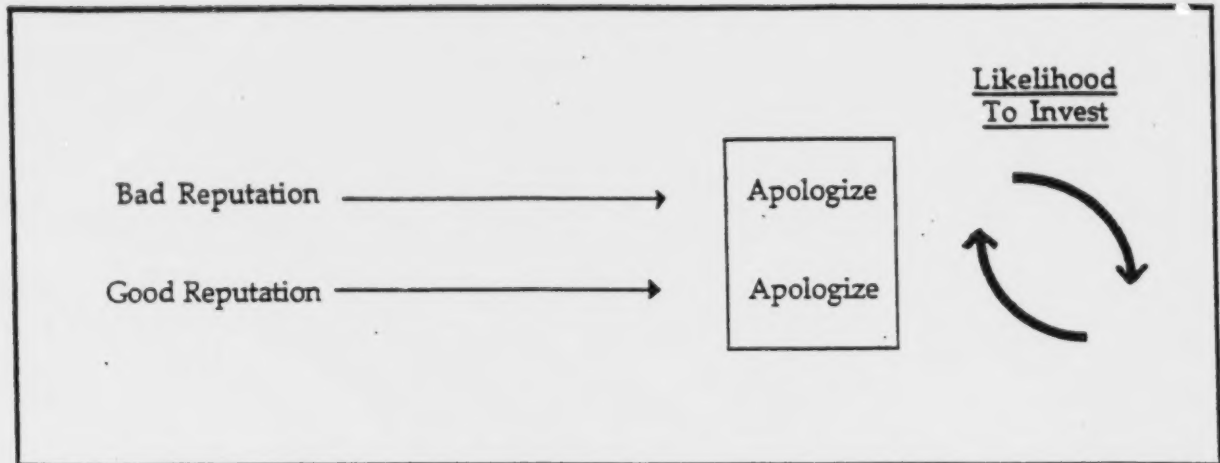


Figure 1.

Subjects' likelihood to invest depending on reputation as a function of response.

Table 1.
A summary of each hypothesis and corresponding results.

<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>Results</u>
H 1: Better memory for companies with bad reputations	Total details -- N.S. Accurate details -- N.S. Central point -- N.S. Matching -- N.S.
H2: Better attitude toward companies with good reputations	Prosocial -- $p=.000$ Typical -- N.S. Management styles -- $p=.001$ Ethical standards -- $p=.000$
H3: Better purchasing and investing behaviors for companies with good reputations	Invest -- $p=.000$ Purchase -- N.S.
H4: Better memory for companies with a defensive response	Total details -- N.S. Accurate details -- N.S. Central point -- N.S. Matching -- N.S.
H5: Better attitude toward companies with an apologetic response	Prosocial -- N.S. Typical -- N.S. Management styles -- N.S. Ethical standards -- N.S.
H6: Better purchasing and investing behaviors for companies with an apologetic response	Invest -- N.S. Purchase -- N.S.
H7: Bad reputation and defensive response will produce the most drastic overall effect	Invest -- .017
H8: Memory will decay after one week	Total details -- $p=.008$ Accurate details -- $p=.000$ Central point -- $p=.000$ Matching -- $p=.000$
H9: Attitude and behavioral intention will regress toward the mean after one week	Prosocial -- $p=.017$ Typical -- N.S. Purchase -- N.S. Invest -- N.S.

APPENDIX

Rustler Co. has recently been hailed by *Forbes* magazine for its progressive "Vision 2000." This organizational plan for the future involves every employee in the company and comes as a result of a year-long process of meetings and surveys involving all 2,000 employees.

Over the past five years, Rustler has implemented extensive internal communication audits, focusing on how it could improve new corporate health, safety and environmental policies. It has used this formal communication to make decisions impacting the companies relationships with communities, customers and employees.

One result, stemming from a growing concern for environmental safety was to restore a wetland, building a sanctuary for local wildlife – including crocodiles, fish, turtles, birds and various flora – with an lake at its center.

Rustler is considered a leading force for corporate good – committed to social responsibility and ethical trade as an integral part of business.

* Sample of a good reputation paragraph and an apologetic response to negative publicity.

CHICAGO (AP)—Officials of a women's underwear company admitted Monday that a toxic chemical spilled from their factory into the Chicago River.

Landon J. "Lanny" Isham, chairman and CEO of Rustler Women's Wear, 155 Canal St., said the chemical, apparently leaked into the river for 30 hours. Isham said officials are still trying to find out how many gallons of the chemical flowed into the river, but that their estimate as of late Monday morning was about 2,000 gallons.

Todd Foster of the Illinois state Environmental Protection Agency said that the chemical is toxic to humans and animals, who typically become ill from inhaling its fumes and may die from ingesting even small quantities through water, other liquids, or food. Foster speculated that the spill will eventually kill hundreds or even thousands of fish. He added that the spill will be carefully monitored for whether the chemical drifts toward Chicago water treatment plants or beaches.

Foster said that water treatment plants typically can remove such chemicals from drinking water and therefore that the spill posed little hazard for Chicago residents unless it hits beaches.

He noted that Rustler was using the chemical legally and that it is fairly commonly used in clothing manufacturing to set various shades of purple dyes so that they don't fade in sunlight or wash out during cleaning.

"I think I speak for the entire family of Rustler managers, employees and even our chemicals supplier, Gas Products Inc., when I say that we are horrified by this event," Isham said. He said that he is active himself in various environmental causes and organizations, and that the chemical spill is "like a nightmare to me."

He explained that the company had no operational need to be located next to a river, and that the factory located to Canal Street only because executives wanted to help revitalize the area by rehabilitating the abandoned warehouse that became its factory.

Isham said that company policy and procedures had been specifically designed to prevent spills both inside and outside the factory, especially because of its location next to the river. In a prepared statement, Isham said his company has been "socially responsible in both employment and environmental matters," and he hoped the public will "see this incident as the tragic, isolated instance that it is."

Although the exact cause for the spill is not certain, it appears to have resulted from a combination of accidents. Troy Montoya, the factory's operations director, said that a pipe from a vat containing the chemical burst nearby a broken window, and that the chemical spurted out the window onto the sidewalk below. The sidewalk had been designed to drain rainwater into the river, a common practice for old sidewalks near the river, Montoya explained.

Montoya explained that the leak was in a little used area of the factory and that employees discovered it Monday morning about 10 a.m. when they went outside to smoke.

Rustler, based in Grand Tetons, Wyo., was founded in 1988 by Isham's late wife, Lori, and is still closely-held by the family. In 1989, it was briefly in the news when employees of Rustlers, a Hanover, Pa.-based men's clothing company, urged their executives to file suit against Rustler Women's Wear for trademark infringement. However, Rustlers executives said they had no plans to ever manufacture women's clothing, and Rustler Women's Wear name was probably helpful to Rustlers marketing.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

International Female, known as a major manufacturer in the clothing industry, has recently come under fire once again. The company, already known for a poor environmental record and repeated union disputes, is once again facing public scrutiny. The Federal Trade Commission has issued a cease and desist order for a series of false and misleading advertisements.

The television advertisements claim that International Female has been and continues to be a leading philanthropic force in AIDS research, when in fact, there are no financial records proving this true.

Upon public release of this news, 250 AIDS activists hanged an effigy of International Female President and CEO, while demonstrators marched on the company's headquarters, according to a recent article in *Business Ethics*

* Sample of a bad reputation paragraph and a defensive response to negative publicity.

CHARLESTON, W.V. (AP) — Although sooty, black smoke belched from the smokestack of International Female Jean Co.'s factory for hours Wednesday night and was visible for more than two miles, company executives insist all factory operations have remained normal.

Area residents, including various city and county officials, began calling state and federal officials, as well as International Female Jean Co. offices, Thursday morning. They said the smoke seemed significantly more and thicker than usual; estimates put the smoke's quantity and density at five to 20 times normal levels. One executive of a nearby company, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the smoke was typical of that from smokestacks with malfunctioning or non-functioning smoke scrubbers.

But International Female's President Glorianne Osborne said that smoke emitting from the smokestacks, located in east central downtown near the Byrd Freeway contains only steam, carbon dioxide, low levels of carbon monoxide, and "extremely low" levels of other gases. She said that she has no indication that emissions changed significantly this week.

Osborne admitted that the entire factory was shut down by late Thursday morning, but "only until we resolve these baseless complaints." She added that her company wishes to "apologize to our employees, our employees' families, and our retailers" for being forced to shut down the factory without just cause. About 300 people work at the site.

State air pollution control officials are investigating the situation and had no details as yet. Jimmy Mathias, director of the state Environmental Protection Agency, said that shutting the plant down relatively quickly limited the amount of risk to citizens in Charleston and to its east, if there was any risk.

To be safe, Mathias said, persons with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and other lung and respiratory ailments should stay indoors. He also urged Charleston residents to take immediate steps to decrease the number of other pollutants in the air for one or two days. Downtown workers should try to carpool or take public buses, Mathias explained, and residents in the eastern part of the metropolitan area should limit burning in woodstoves, backyards and farm fields.

Osborne explained her factory's smokestack scrubbers have been in use since the late 1970s, and had undergone extensive modification since then to comply with increasingly strict local, state and federal air quality standards. She rebuffed reporters' questions about scrubber inspections and whether they should already have been replaced with new ones.

Matthew McGovern, spokesman for Our Lady of Mercy Hospital, said that his hospital has received no admissions of International Female employees or others since the accident, but said that he wouldn't be surprised if they were. "Persons with respiratory ailments exacerbated by inhaling unscrubbed smoke may not seek emergency care unless breathing problems or pain persist," he explained.

Charleston Mayor Dana Fields said that he had heard many complaints and comments about the International Female plant but was unyet aware of any significant injuries or other damage. "We have confidence that International Female not only works to prevent environmental hazards, but that in the event of problems, it will quickly fix them so that its employees can return to work. We also believe that International Female is the kind of company that will take steps to make sure that no specific accident ever happens a second time," he said.

"International Female is an important Charleston employer and has always acted responsibly before," Fields said. "If something has gone wrong, we will consider this to be an isolated incident for which International Female is taking appropriate steps." He confirmed that he had been in touch with Osborne.

The mayor added that advisors told him that state and federal laws are clear about required performance levels of air pollution scrubbers, but are vague about the circumstances under which scrubbers must be replaced.

Learning to Swim Skillfully in Uncharted Waters:

Doris E. Fleischman, 1913-1922

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When she graduated from Barnard College in spring 1913, Doris E. Fleischman said, she was "shoved into the ocean without having learned to swim."¹ Although she was a talented singer and athlete, she had never read a newspaper, knew little about the world and felt "bewildered" when her father asked her what she planned to do after graduation. At age 21, she knew she would "do something" but had no clear idea what that would be and no confidence that she was prepared for any career at all.²

A decade later, she was excelling in a profession that had not been invented when she graduated from college and leading a life that would have been unimaginable to her at that earlier time. In September 1922 she became an equal partner, with its founder, in one of the country's earliest and most successful public relations agencies, having helped it first thrive as a publicity service and then evolve into a public relations firm. She did this with almost no public recognition, in contrast to the firm's founder, Edward L. Bernays, who cultivated the limelight from the start and, throughout his career, usually received sole credit for the agency's accomplishments. When he died in 1995, the headline of his New York Times obituary labeled him the "father of public relations."³ But his partnership with Fleischman in the birth and development of the field has only recently been acknowledged.⁴

This paper looks at the beginnings of Fleischman's career and the beginnings of the profession she helped form, providing new understanding of public relations' early years. These years have not yet been well documented, in part because the behind-the-scenes nature of many of the activities carried out makes them difficult to study. Similarly, although today the advantages of public relations collaboration are widely understood, little is known about the ways early collaborators worked together because their still-further-behind-the-scenes interactions make researching them doubly problematic. And while the contributions of many individual men to the development of public relations have been at least broadly sketched, women's early work rarely has been studied.

This period is a significant one for understanding Fleischman as an individual as well as the patterns of what was to become her 62-year-long collaboration with Bernays. Because their business was relatively simple when it began and the bulk of her work was precisely defined, it is much easier to identify her skills and responsibilities then than it is during the remainder of their partnership, when their work essentially merged. Separating out key components of her work at this time reveals what she brought to the business from the start and how she helped it develop. Several new findings also correct inaccurate claims repeatedly made by Fleischman and Bernays about her activities both before and after they joined together.

Utilization of a wide range of sources made it possible to chart Fleischman and Bernays's work preceding their partnership, growth of and changes in their new agency, their development of public relations techniques that were to become mainstays, and some of the reasons their early collaboration was so successful. Searches of two archival collections—one at the Library of Congress and the other at the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women at Radcliffe College—yielded client files, business and personal correspondence, written reminiscences, business records, and other relevant materials. The author's numerous interviews with Bernays and the couple's two daughters offered additional perspectives. Also utilized were a Columbia University oral history with Bernays, many books and articles written by Fleischman and Bernays, histories that shed light on particular campaigns, and additional primary and secondary sources.

1913 to 1919: From Little Direction to Publicity Direction

Fleischman's life changed during the period of this study largely due to fundamental career decisions made by her friend, Edward Bernays. First, he almost accidentally became a theatrical press agent in 1913 when, while editing two small medical magazines, he also ingeniously promoted a controversial play about syphilis,

"Damaged Goods," which a physician had praised in one of his magazines.⁵ He later explained the effect of this experience: "I had had so much pleasure from what I had done that I said to myself, 'This is what I want to do.' I became a press agent."⁶

For the next five years he was a highly successful publicist for Broadway plays, actors, musical performers such as Enrico Caruso, and—during three years that he said "taught me more about life than I have learned from politics, books, romance, marriage and fatherhood in the years since"—Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. He described this work as "one thrill after another" and loved what he did. Yet clearly as exciting to him as the glamour and sophistication of the performing arts world was his own success. He had found his calling and quickly learned that he was very good at it.⁷

But he happily stopped this work in June 1918 when he joined the many journalists, press agents and advertising people working for the U.S. Committee on Public Information. Headed by George Creel, this huge propaganda operation was extraordinarily effective in building nationwide public support for this country's World War I efforts and spreading U.S. government views to the rest of the world. Bernays worked out of the New York office of the CPI Foreign Press Bureau, until, when the war ended in November, he went to the Paris for the Versailles Peace Conference as part of the official press mission.⁸

The CPI has been widely credited with vividly demonstrating the power of organized, well-funded public opinion manipulation. The general public increasingly became aware of this power, as did businesses and other organizations. And many of the people who had worked for the CPI were particularly struck by its effectiveness, Bernays among them.⁹ He also was affected by his experiences at the Peace Conference. "Paris was swarming with ethnic entities that had been promised independence in Wilson's Fourteen Points," he explained, and "I couldn't but observe the tremendous emphasis the small nations of the world placed on public opinion." Having "seen this world picture emphasizing the power of words and ideas," he

decided that when he returned to New York in March 1919 he "would go into an activity that dealt with this force of ideas to affect attitudes."¹⁰

Bernays's CPI connections soon resulted in contracts to do publicity work for two organizations. On March 20 the Lithuanian National Council hired him to help in its efforts to obtain U.S. support for recognition of the country as an independent republic, and ten weeks later he began to work with the U.S. War Department on its campaign for the re-employment of former servicemen. He initially operated just as he had as a theatrical press agent—out of his clients' offices or his parents' home, where he lived. On July 28, 1919, though, he made a second career change when he opened his own office. That same day, he hired Doris Fleischman as a staff writer.¹¹

In 1919 Fleischman had much less to show for the preceding years than did her new boss. After graduating from college in 1913, she apparently worked as a fundraiser and publicist for a charity on New York's lower east side.¹² The next year, Bernays helped her get a job at the New York Tribune, where she began as a women's page writer, then was promoted to assistant women's page editor and assistant Sunday editor. Sometimes writing as many as three long feature stories a week, she interviewed many well-known people, traveled to San Francisco to report on the Women's Peace Conference at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and was the first woman to cover a prize fight for a major newspaper. Although she seems to have greatly enjoyed this work and done well at it, she left the Tribune sometime in 1916.¹³

Exactly when and why she left remains a mystery. In interviews Bernays was very reluctant to acknowledge that she stopped working at the Tribune before 1919, while in her own published and unpublished writings and in interviews, Fleischman seldom admitted that she left before this date. One friend from the 1970s with whom she sometimes discussed her early career speculates that she left for family reasons.¹⁴

Imprecise as it is, this interpretation makes sense and helps explain her reticence in discussing this period of her life.

In 1916 she was living at home with her parents. Her mother, Harriet Rosenthal Fleischman, was a pleasant, compliant woman—in many ways a typical late-Victorian upper-middle-class wife and mother—while her father, Samuel E. Fleischman, was a very rigid, authoritarian man who exerted firm control over his family. A prominent lawyer who was conservative in most of his views, he nonetheless encouraged Doris to attend a good college and then get a job when she graduated—but she did not accept the offer from the Tribune until she had asked his permission to do so. And, fearful that she would be hurt, he accompanied her when she covered the prize fight.¹⁵ Her father was by far the strongest force in her life, and she certainly would have left the Tribune if that was what he wanted.

Just slightly more is known about her professional life following her departure from the Tribune. Only after much prodding did Bernays eventually reveal that she carried out a long study of philanthropy for the Baron de Hirsch fund and also did some freelance publicity and fundraising work.¹⁶ One client for which she apparently did considerable work was a hospital, the Spring Street Infirmary, which she later called "a terrible place."¹⁷ None of this work seems to have been very satisfying, and it certainly was a step down from the Tribune. She must have been delighted when Bernays offered her a full-time position in July 1919.

Both Fleischman and Bernays consistently asserted that he hired her directly away from the Tribune in 1919. This claim both obscures how she spent the three years after she left the Tribune and neglects to recognize one additional freelance job she held during this time. A careful examination of the work Bernays carried out for both the Lithuanian National Council and the War Department in spring and early summer 1919 reveals that Fleischman wrote press releases for him before he opened his own office and hired her.¹⁸

Certainly she was a logical choice. She was looking for freelance work and Bernays had thought she was a talented writer since reading her high school fiction. They had lived around the corner from each other (he on West 106th Street, she on West 107th Street) since 1912, he had helped her make the contacts that led to her Tribune job, and she had gone with him to see "Damaged Goods" and other theatrical productions he promoted.¹⁹ She also said that, during the time he edited the two medical magazines, "I wrote reviews and stories for him for fun."²⁰

At the same time, his work was extensive enough to require help. In addition to organizing promotional events for the Lithuanian National Council, he had agreed to produce six press releases a week, which often required extensive research. His War Department work was more sophisticated and complex, involving the production of new programs, slogans and large numbers of press releases. For both clients, he had the releases typeset, bound into pads, and sent to newspapers and other publications ready of reproduction, so he also had to work extensively with printers and mailers. He was quite well-paid—receiving \$150 a week from the Lithuanian National Council and \$100 (plus a large expense budget) from the War Department—so he could afford to pay a freelancer.²¹

By the end of July, he also realized he could afford to rent his own three-room office on the fifth floor of an old building at 19 East 48th Street. He calculated his first month's expenses for rent and furniture at \$1,357. And his first employee, Fleischman, was a bargain at \$50 a week. She quickly helped him hire a secretary, a mail clerk, an office boy, and his brother-in-law Murray C. Bernays, who was paid \$75 a week to do research and some writing.²²

Fleischman later blamed herself for not asking for a higher salary (she actually had requested \$45), but said she knew little about money since she lived at home and her father supported her. Her salary "was extra and unimportant."²³ That for three years she had had no full-time job, and probably modest freelance income, also may

have led her to give little thought to her salary when she was offered this position as a writer. (In fairness, it is possible that she might not have asked for more even if she had carefully considered her situation. A 1921 book about professional women noted that salaries for "experienced publicity consultants" were "around \$50 a week, and are said to be about ten per cent lower than those for men."²⁴ A 1920 book describing careers for women quoted a "director of one publicity agency" as saying that women "free-lance workers" could earn from \$50-100 a week.²⁵ When she left the Tribune, Fleischman had been making \$22 a week.²⁶)

Bernays had struggled with what to call his new business, finally settling on "Edward L. Bernays Publicity Direction." He hoped this would differentiate him from press agents by indicating that he would "direct actions of my client to get publicity and win public support."²⁷ But much of his work during the rest of 1919 seems to have been little different from his pre-war press-agent activities in which he simply called attention to his clients (albeit often cleverly). One reason for this may have been that he had numerous theatrical clients. "I accepted these assignments because I was not yet well enough established not to," he explained. Other clients that year included the American Civil Liberties Union, Best Foods Company (for which they helped launch a new salad oil), and the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropies (which was conducting a large fundraising drive). The Lithuanian National Council and War Department continued as clients through the summer.²⁸ By the end of December, he had ten employees and had earned about \$11,000.²⁹

Publicity and "Aggressive Publishing"

His largest client during his first year in his new office, and the one for whom he went on to work the longest, was the book publisher Boni and Liveright. An examination of portions of this campaign is useful because they typify key strategies Bernays and Fleischman were to use for many years and show how well-developed

these strategies were at the start of their business. Specific contributions by Fleischman also can easily be identified.

Fleischman seems to have played a role in obtaining this client, since Bernays was introduced to Horace Liveright, the owner of the firm, by her much-adored older brother, Leon. A poet and former newspaper reporter, Leon had recently bought into the firm as a vice-president and also served as its secretary and treasurer. Whatever his sister's role, the match was an excellent one. Horace Liveright, who hired Bernays in fall 1919, was a daring young publisher who was willing to gamble on unknown authors and controversial books. He had recently lured a few established authors like Theodore Dreiser to his firm, but he also was anxious to publish works by the Greenwich Village intellectuals who had been ignored by his rival publishers, among whom he had a reputation as somewhat of a political radical.³⁰

"Other publishers deplored him, some envied him, and all had to admire his list," according to book historian John Tebbel. "If Liveright did not invent the literary renaissance of the twenties, he was at least its chief conductor."³¹ And he was enthusiastic about breaking both the old, staid molds of book publishing as well as the musty conventions of bookselling. He had, in Bernays's words, "faith in aggressive publishing." Bernays, in turn, was "eager to try out our strategies and tactics on books." He believed "books should respond more quickly to our techniques than almost any other commodity."³²

During the year-long campaign, Bernays and Fleischman focused on expanding the book-reading public beyond the narrow audience previously identified by most publishers. They prepared an attractive supplementary catalog highlighting the most important books—those that would be discussed wherever "men and women, who are interested in life and the books that express life, gather"—and bombarded 300 bookstores with weekly circulars on different books. In addition to sending out constant short press releases, they offered 100 feature articles related to Boni and

Liveright books to newspapers throughout the country.³³ Editors first received brief synopses of articles "prepared for your free publication by our Doris Fleischman, who was until recently on the staff of the New York Tribune, and by other experienced feature writers." They returned postcards indicating the articles they wanted, which then were sent to them.³⁴

A small number of books were singled out for special publicity efforts. One was Christopher Morley and Bart Haley's satire on Prohibition, In the Sweet Dry and Dry. Copious feature stories and shorter releases were supplemented by the creation of a booklovers tavern in New York's Majestic Hotel, whose bar had been closed by Prohibition. Books replaced bottles behind the bar while other Boni and Liveright authors, as well as the president of the New York County chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, were in attendance at its well-covered opening.³⁵ This was a good example of a frequently used technique that Bernays variously labeled "the overt act," "created circumstances" and "the created event." As he explained it in 1923, with such activities the public relations counsel "is not merely the purveyor of news; he is more logically the creator of news."³⁶

The campaign for Iron City by M. H. Hedges illustrates another technique—the "segmental approach"—that Bernays and Fleischman went on to repeatedly use. This strategy, Bernays explained, required the practitioner to "subdivide the appeal of his subject and present it through the widest possible variety of avenues to the public."³⁷ Set on a college campus, Iron City dealt with a wide range of issues that Fleischman "subdivided" into features with titles such as "Can the College Woman Love?", "Big Business and the American College—What Will Happen When the Two are Divorced?" and "Soldier Presidents—Will the World Produce Another Crop of Military Chief Executives?" (the college president in the novel had a military background). One release even asked the question, "Are the Children of College Parents Puny?"³⁸

Other releases connected the book to current news events, including fall 1919 strikes in the coal industry and a strike by professors at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh (the book portrayed a professors strike). Author Hedges was asked to identify college professors who would be willing to talk with newspaper reporters about issues raised in the novel, letters extolling the book were sent to teachers unions, and attempts were made to obtain cooperative publicity with the Stutz Motor Car Company and Chicago's Marshall Field and Company (both prominently mentioned in the book).³⁹

Another effectively utilized strategy was the association of specific books with well-known people—whether or not they had any real connection to the books. Thus, for example, to call attention to Adriana Spadoni's The Swing of the Pendulum, a novel dealing with a professional woman and her lovers, releases were prepared describing contemporary women activists like Alice Duer Miller and Helen Rogers Reid. Similarly, anarchist writer Hutchins Hapgood's serious novel, The Story of a Lover (written anonymously), was publicized with quotes from movie stars like Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish, who had supplied Bernays with their definitions of love. Within six months, 11,000 copies were sold.⁴⁰

The Boni and Liveright campaign bears examination in part because of its effects. Intellectual historian Ann Douglas said that it "made sellers out of books that were not natural sellers" and proved it was possible to "create market receptivity and revenue."⁴¹ Not everything they tried was successful, and no doubt much of this steady stream of publicity was ignored. But they did succeed in helping to expand the appeal of books, and certainly excitement was generated for some Boni and Liveright titles that otherwise would have received little attention. Horace Liveright must have believed these kinds of actions were productive, for during the remainder of the decade he went on to spend over a million dollars promoting his books through public relations and advertising.⁴²

More important, many other publishers began to adopt much more dynamic sales techniques aimed at broader audiences, while new companies publishing books for previously neglected markets were born. Bookselling changed.⁴³ By the end of the decade, according to John Tebbel, "Publishers were at last convinced of the value of promotion and publicity, much more so than they had been before the war, and for the first time they were willing to spend money on it."⁴⁴

"A Nose for News and a Steady Compulsion to Write"

Bernays later wrote, "My work with Liveright represented a divide between what I had done—my press-agentry, publicity, publicity direction—and what I now attempted to do: counsel on public relations."⁴⁵ In 1920 Fleischman played at least one significant role in this change when she helped him coin the phrase "counsel on public relations" to describe what they saw as a new role: "giving professional advice to our clients on their public relationships, regardless of whether such advice resulted in publicity."⁴⁶ Bernays frequently credited Fleischman with being co-creator of this new title, also noting that she earlier had helped him develop the label "publicity direction" for the services he provided when he opened his office in 1919.⁴⁷

She called on different talents in 1920 when Bernays was hurriedly hired by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to stage a campaign for its Atlanta national convention, planned for late May and early June. This was the first NAACP convention ever held in the South, and the decision to meet in Atlanta had been controversial among the organization's members. The city had been the scene of fierce race riots in 1906, lynchings and mob violence had increased since that time, and antagonism against local NAACP chapters had grown in other areas of the South.⁴⁸

When the regular NAACP publicity person became ill, Bernays was hired in early May to take over publicity efforts. Neither Bernays nor Fleischman knew much

about the problems faced by American blacks, particularly in the South, and because the convention would begin soon, they had to act quickly, with little time for planning. Their only instructions were to get extensive good publicity into southern newspapers (most of which had previously shown little support for the NAACP). Otherwise, they were on their own.⁴⁹

Bernays stayed in New York to work with northern media and sent Fleischman by herself to Atlanta. Since they knew little about the situation in the city, her job was essentially to be an advance person—to "probe the territory from the standpoint of public opinion" and also, Bernays said, "to make arrangements for news coverage and to try to assure that some top Georgian political figures would attend our meetings so that we could publicize the sanction our cause was receiving in Atlanta by their presence."⁵⁰

Bernays explained that one reason he gave Fleischman this assignment was that he thought she would be able to avoid antagonizing the people she was trying to persuade to take actions they no doubt would have preferred not to take. He also believed the people she encountered would like her.⁵¹ She first met with the city's mayor and the state's governor. According to Bernays, after the governor warned Fleischman that he thought whites were likely to cause trouble, she asked him to put the National Guard on reserve, which he did by phone as she sat in his office. Still, neither he nor the mayor ultimately agreed to attend the convention (the mayor did send an official welcome).⁵²

She had more success when she next met with men at Atlanta's daily newspapers and wire service bureaus. They all agreed to either cover conference meetings or write reports based on news releases they received. The Atlanta Constitution's city editor both consulted with Fleischman on how to cover what was for him an unusual event and asked her to provide stories on individual meetings as well as interviews with key participants. All of these media went on to provide substantial

positive coverage.⁵³ According to Fleischman, "Their calm and matter-of-fact handling helped to make the community accept this invasion from the North quietly."⁵⁴

Fleischman had received no NAACP briefing on the likely situation in Atlanta and was, Bernays said, "oblivious to the dangers of her mission."⁵⁵ Indeed, it was many years before she learned from NAACP Assistant Secretary Walter White that she had been accompanied by a four-man bodyguard each time she left her hotel. Branded a "nigger lover" by some whites, she also had failed to notice the men standing around the hotel lobby who threw pennies at her feet to tell her they thought she was no better than a prostitute who would sell herself for pennies.⁵⁶ She did express her relief that the city had stayed calm in a news release she prepared after the convention had ended. "Atlanta is breathing easier now . . . and so are the delegates," she wrote. She quoted one delegate as saying she couldn't wait to get home because "I feel as if I were sitting on a volcano."⁵⁷

Bernays met her in Atlanta during the week of the convention and together they worked out a plan to guide their remaining work. After deciding on a "publicity platform" stating three themes they would stress in their releases, they set about "preparing copy for the newspapers under constant deadlines."⁵⁸ Mary White Ovington, the NAACP chairman of the board who attended the conference, said that their technique "was to make friends with the reporters and do all their work."⁵⁹ They also telegraphed stories to New York and Chicago newspapers, inserting quotes supporting the NAACP's goals that they previously had obtained from prominent clergy.⁶⁰

Their efforts appear to have been successful. Ovington remarked with surprise at "how fully and correctly the Atlanta Constitution reported our meetings."⁶¹ Soon after the convention, the NAACP's Walter White informed Bernays that "The amount of publicity secured, largely through your efforts, was greater than at any other of the ten conferences preceding, although all of these conferences were held in northern

cities."⁶² Similarly, The Nation reported that this convention had received more publicity than any held previously.⁶³

The convention also had strong personal meaning for Fleischman. When the meetings were over, she and Bernays met members of the NAACP northern delegation at the Atlanta railroad station and she insisted on joining the black delegates in the Jim Crow sleeping car for the trip north, even though it was illegal.⁶⁴ Forty years later, she said of her Atlanta experience, "No work I have ever done has had so deep and lasting an effect on me."⁶⁵

Her work for other clients during this time was more routine, but they did keep her very busy writing and placing stories. She described herself during this time as having "a nose for news and a steady compulsion to write."⁶⁶ A fast writer (and typist) with an exceptional vocabulary, she also was an excellent editor. She often wrote between 15 and 20 stories a week, then took them to newspaper offices and worked to get them placed. Bernays said she was good at placing because, if editors wanted changes, she was able to quickly modify what she had written for them.⁶⁷

Clients added in 1920 and 1921 included several theatrical producers and performers, Good Housekeeping and Cosmopolitan magazines, Cartier jewelers, the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, the Dort Motor Company, an accounting firm, a clothing company, and the National Council of American Importers and Traders.⁶⁸ Their "first big business client," in Bernays's words, was the U.S. Radium Corporation, which hired them in 1920 to promote radium's luminous properties for commercial use and its application in cancer therapy. Fleischman's stories, which were distributed in printed clip sheets for immediate use, had titles like "The Royal Jewel of Today," "Radium Becoming a Household Aid" and "Radium Bank for Those Who Bank on Radium."⁶⁹ The latter story described a service their client had established at their suggestion: a national radium bank, which made radium accessible to physicians treating cancer patients (and called attention to the medicinal value of radium).⁷⁰

In addition to doing extensive writing during this time, Fleischman was the firm's office manager. From the start, Bernays said, she was "the balance wheel of our operation."⁷¹ Thus she interviewed all job candidates, set up schedules, charted the work being done for different clients, kept the books and paid bills.⁷² One of the few surviving office memos between Fleischman and Bernays from this time nicely illustrates some of her responsibilities. Probably written by Fleischman in early 1921 when she planned to be briefly absent, it brought Bernays up to date on their campaigns for four key clients, left instructions for following up on specific tasks, explained the work others in the office would carry out, and detailed payments received and bills due. She said that monthly vouchers had not yet been checked, but "Please do not do anything about this until I get back, because I'm not happy unless I do it myself."⁷³ No wonder Bernays asserted that her work "took the burden off me."⁷⁴ She certainly knew much more about how their office operated than he did.

Collaboration and a Changing Business

Fleischman likely took care of many of the details when in 1921 they moved from their three cramped rooms in an old building to newer, larger, more attractive offices at a "prime address" on 46th Street and Fifth Avenue.⁷⁵ With the move she gained her own office, rather than sharing a crowded space outside of Bernays's office with other staff members, as she had previously.⁷⁶ Apparently, though, their staff stayed the same size it had been in 1919, when Bernays had ten employees.⁷⁷

Their staff may not have increased but their income certainly had. When they began, they tried to set their rates at a minimum of \$75 a week, but by the early 1920s, they were earning between \$12,000 and \$25,000 a year from most clients.⁷⁸ They certainly were able to afford nicer quarters, particularly since their business was expanding. Clients added in 1922 included Macy's department store, the Hotel Association of New York (which hired them to publicize New York as a friendly place to

visit), the McAlpin Hotel, the National Prosperity Bureau, and numerous performers and event organizers.⁷⁹ By that year, Bernays noted, "our office had worked out effective approaches to publicizing inventions and discoveries."⁸⁰

Occasionally, Fleischman was in charge of entire small campaigns. For example, in January 1921 she planned, carried out all of the publicity for and worked closely with the organizers of two charity fundraisers. Her earlier fundraising work must have made these kinds of activities very familiar to her. The first event was a musical review presented by the Cardiac Committee of the Public Education Association; the other, for which she obtained excellent advance coverage, was a symphony concert at Carnegie Hill to benefit the Babies Hospital of New York.⁸¹ All surviving news releases for the latter activity are identified as "From Doris E. Fleischman, 19 East 48th Street." They contain no reference to Bernays.⁸²

These are among the few examples of client contact that can be found for Fleischman. Indeed, Bernays repeatedly maintained that she never had client contacts.⁸³ However, it appears that, particularly in the early 1920s, she did sometimes have these contacts. For example, in 1922, she made the initial contact and then met with the publisher of American Agriculturist to plan a campaign for his weekly magazine. Her notes from the meeting show that, among other things, she suggested ways of attracting more young readers through new kinds of stories and the formation of boys' and girls' clubs, proposed a more scientific-sounding name for the magazine's testing department, advised that more articles about new patents be run, since this might encourage new advertising, and recommended that well-known public officials be solicited for articles, which then could be widely distributed to media organizations and interest groups.⁸⁴

A year later, when she traveled to Europe by herself, she met with a French colonial official to work out a plan for "tout le service de publicite en vue d'une campagne de propaganda intensive," which would promote U.S. tourism to North

Africa.⁸⁵ Since part of the purpose of her European trip was to meet with business and government officials who could help the firm, it seems likely that she made other client contacts there as well. Much later, Bernays denied that she met with any clients on this trip—although that may simply be traced to faulty memory.⁸⁶

There is no doubt, though, that even in the early 1920s she had scant client contact. This was despite her extensive knowledge of public relations tactics and her demonstrated competence in working with people outside their agency. In addition to having been the contact person for a few small clients, she had worked successfully with New York newspaper editors as a "placer" and had been persuasive with the Atlanta editors making decisions about NAACP coverage.

She offered her own explanation for her lack of client contacts when she wrote: "Many men resented having women tell them what to do in their business. They resented having men tell them, too, but advice from a woman was somewhat demeaning." She feared "if ideas were considered first in terms of my sex, they might never get around to being judged on their merits."⁸⁷ In his memoirs Bernays closely echoed her explanation, using similar words to explain why clients didn't meet with Fleischman.⁸⁸

Yet in interviews he gave a more pragmatic reason: "If it had been known I was linked up with a woman, I would have been considered an imbecile or somebody strange." Indeed, he believed that if her involvement had been known "when we started in 1919, it would have meant, I am sure, that we wouldn't have had any clients at all."⁸⁹ He also maintained that, since she was a woman, most clients wouldn't have believed her, so it made no sense for her to work directly with them. Rather, her good ideas should be filtered through him so that they would be accepted.⁹⁰

Certainly she became more qualified to advise clients in the early 1920s as she spent less time writing and more time working with Bernays on campaign strategizing. "I decided early on that writing was the least important part of public

relations," Bernays explained.⁹¹ He said that about two years after they began, having realized that "actions spoke louder than words," they "changed from thinking that announcements to people were of value." As a result, Fleischman's writing skills became much less valuable than her ability to "originate and develop programs for action." She thus wrote fewer and fewer news releases, Bernays said, since "I found her brain was a much greater talent than her writing, because as we moved along from that early period, we gave advice, and the advice is what they paid us for."⁹²

Bernays was not able to explain precisely when these changes occurred and the written record is sketchy, but it does show Fleischman continuing to write and place stories at least as late as 1922.⁹³ Still, he was adamant that, from the firm's beginnings in 1919, the two of them developed campaigns together. As Bernays put it, "I had the advantage of [Fleischman] having a mind that I thought was as good as mine that I could always play with" in campaign development. After he met with clients, the two often brainstormed together—suggesting alternatives, identifying critical issues, speculating on outcomes, critiquing each other's ideas, talking through possible strategies.⁹⁴ No doubt one reason they were able to increasingly offer advice was that Bernays had someone with whom to collaborate in forming complex plans.

One additional change in 1922 can be much more precisely identified. On September 22, 1922, Fleischman and Bernays were married, and shortly afterwards they signed legal documents that made them equal partners in the firm of Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations.⁹⁵ They both came to refer to their life and work together after this time as their "twenty-four-hour-a-day partnership." It continued until Fleischman's death in July 1980.

Conclusions: "The Best Move I Ever Made"

Forty years after beginning his new firm, Bernays looked back over his career and wrote that hiring Fleischman in 1919 was "the best move I ever made in my life."⁹⁶

This paper has shown some of the ways Bernays benefited from that decision during his firm's beginnings and early growth as well as the ways that decision changed Fleischman's own life.

In 1919 and 1920, when much of their work involved gaining publicity for their clients through press releases, Bernays relied on Fleischman to produce large numbers of them. She proved to be very good at both writing and placing, and her ability to write diverse stories even about narrow subjects helped them utilize the "segmental approach." Her Tribune background also was used as a selling point in placing national stories for Boni and Liveright, and probably in other campaigns as well. Additionally, she freed Bernays from many practical day-to-day concerns by serving as his office manager.

Her value increased as she learned from her work experiences and they moved from doing "publicity direction" to the expanded "counsel on public relations"—a phrase they coined collaboratively in 1920. Bernays was an expert at publicity, but once he was trying to go further, he needed someone with whom he could talk through possible new approaches, especially someone who had excellent ideas of her own. Their complementary abilities and personalities, evident from the beginning of their work together, help explain the highly productive synergy of their later collaboration.

One important difference between them was in their perceptions of their own strengths and roles. Bernays quickly came to see himself as a scientist, theoretician and philosopher. Anxious to apply techniques and ideas from the behavioral and social sciences to public relations, he loved developing principles, thinking broadly, intellectualizing. In interviews and his own extensive writings, he pontificated at length about his theories and found meaning beyond their immediate campaign effects.

Two public relations historians have aptly noted some of the most conspicuous qualities of his mind and personality. Scott Cutlip described Bernays as "a man who was bright, articulate to excess, and most of all, an innovative thinker and philosopher

of his vocation."⁹⁷ Stuart Ewen called Bernays "the most important theorist of American public relations." He scrupulously read Bernays's key 1920s publications and relied heavily on them in describing the field's underpinnings, but he also pointed out the "customary bombast" of those writings.⁹⁸

Fleischman, though, was devoid of bombast. In contrast to her forceful, confident collaborator, she was modest and somewhat shy, seeming to have little need for the approval or attention of others. At the same time, she was far more organized and practical than Bernays (as shown, in a simple example, by her work as their office manager). She was able to help him translate his broad ideas into workable strategies and also had a particular talent for anticipating how the public likely would react to these strategies.⁹⁹

An excellent listener and a quick, perceptive judge of people, she also had much stronger interpersonal skills than her husband. People tended to like her when they first met her, in part because they often found she understood them and was sensitive to their needs.¹⁰⁰ Daughter Anne Bernays, who noted that Bernays often had trouble reading people accurately, called Fleischman his "personal antennae for judging people."¹⁰¹ He admitted that "her insight and judgment are better than mine."¹⁰²

Given these strengths, it seems very likely that she would have contributed even more to the firm if her responsibilities had included consistent client contacts. But these contacts were minimal in the early years covered here, and apparently by the end of the 1920s she had none at all.¹⁰³ According to both Bernays and Fleischman, there was a simple reason for this: Clients would have either refused to work with her or disregarded her advice.

This rationale, though, is inconsistent with what they said when they wrote about women working in public relations, rather than about their own work. Here, they expressed confidence that women could—and should—do everything men did. Thus in

the three pieces Fleischman published about women as public relations practitioners, she consistently described their client contacts and never mentioned any circumstances under which they shouldn't expect to have these contacts.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, in the chapter on public relations he wrote for his 1928 book on careers, Bernays asserted, "Theoretically, there is nothing in this profession that a man can do that a woman cannot do." A woman, he said, "is limited mainly by her personal ability to make the men she deals with realize that she is as capable as if she were a man."¹⁰⁵ And a decade later, in a co-authored article on public relations careers, Fleischman and Bernays declared, "There is nothing in this profession that a man can do that a woman cannot do."¹⁰⁶

Clearly, neither Fleischman nor Bernays believed that other women working in public relations should avoid client contacts, and it must have been obvious that Fleischman was highly capable of carrying out such contacts. Indeed, despite their denials that she ever worked directly with clients, a few examples of her doing this can be found in the early 1920s. It seems likely that other cases also exist for this period, although documentation has not survived. Why, then, did they maintain that she neither had nor should have had these contacts? And why were the contacts she did carry out so minimal in importance and number?

Their daughter Anne offered a forthright answer: "He didn't want her to get the credit."¹⁰⁷ It also is a persuasive answer. Bernays was an exceedingly strong, assertive, dynamic person who loved his work and loved being recognized for it. His early background in theatrical publicity no doubt was an influence here. It is hard to believe that, if he could avoid doing so, he would willingly have shared credit for their work. Sharing credit with a woman at a time when professional women were not widely accepted was even more problematic.

The invisibility of Fleischman's role also was advantageous to Bernays because it helped him do something that he said was a priority in the early 1920s: "Make the

word 'Bernays' stand for advice on public relations."¹⁰⁸ He very consciously promoted not only his clients but himself, while even as he was selling himself, he was selling the new field of public relations. As he put it, "Public relations would become a continuing free client."¹⁰⁹ He carried out two of his most significant early efforts to bring visibility and respectability to this free client (and himself) in 1923. In February, he began teaching the first university course on public relations (at New York University). And later that year, his Crystallizing Public Opinion—this country's first book on public relations—was published by Boni and Liveright. (Bernays orchestrated its elaborate promotional campaign.)¹¹⁰

Business historian Alan R. Raucher succinctly described Bernays as "an aggressively self-confident man, as sure about the social value of public relations work as he was about his own contribution to that field."¹¹¹ This description helps capture his own stake in being identified—as often as possible—as a major figure in the profession and in holding a position that would let him mold the field. There is no doubt that Fleischman helped him gain this influence, work successfully with clients and, when he was writing Crystallizing Public Opinion, form its ideas.¹¹² On a few occasions when he was unavailable, she even (very nervously) taught his New York University course.¹¹³ But he was not about to give up the attention, authority and credit he received from client contacts by sharing them—as he no doubt would have had to do if his partner had been a man.

One important finding of this paper is that the patterns that were to characterize their partnership after their marriage were evident in 1919 and firmly established by the time they married in 1922. From the start, Fleischman brought much-needed writing skills to the business. Soon afterwards, she began collaborating with Bernays in developing strategies and even naming their new profession. Then for six decades, Bernays admitted, her work was as vital as his own to their business and she did everything he did except have client contacts. But, thanks to her public invisibility and

his own prodigious talents for self-promotion, he was the focus of the frequent attention he made sure the firm attracted, receiving virtually all of the credit for its achievements. He benefited from their partnership in ways that were more than practical.¹¹⁴

Fleischman's rewards also were substantial, if more straightforward, and they are clarified by this examination of her early years with Bernays. Most important, she gained a career, and a chance to grow and succeed to an extraordinary degree in it. Although she had been an accomplished newspaperwoman, she seems to have had little career direction and few firm options at the time Bernays hired her. She could not have anticipated that she would find the kind of rewarding, challenging, exciting position her job quickly became. In the beginning, Bernays taught her a great deal even as he took full advantage of her abilities. Most clients may not have known about or appreciated her work and talents, but he certainly did. She felt valued, and must have delighted in seeing measurable results of her work in their growing revenues and list of clients.

A close look at these early years also helps explain why, during the rest of her life, she consistently deferred to him both in their business and in their marriage. In 1919 Bernays was Fleischman's boss. He had envisioned the new business that was to suit her skills so well, while it was his reputation—based on his initial remarkable success in theatrical publicity—that attracted many early clients. He made the decision to hire her, he determined what work she would do, he was her teacher. He also was supremely self-confident. It makes sense that he dominated their relationship at the start, while this early dominance is part of the reason why, 30 years later, she still maintained: "Eddie's word is final and he casts the deciding vote in our partnership. I have elected him Chairman of the Board and Executive President in our personal life and . . . in our public relations office."¹¹⁵

Looking back, she also pondered her lack of client contacts, saying that when she first joined with Bernays in 1919, "I decided that I would not try to compete with

men because the hurdles were too great." Yet she admitted, "I surrendered without having seen an enemy. I wonder if I would try to avoid all conflict with men if I were to begin today."¹¹⁶ These wistful words also might apply to her continuing personal and professional relationship with Bernays.

Still, she must always have thought she owed him a great deal. For, despite her 1913 fears of the ocean, she learned to swim exceedingly well and found the water far more agreeable than it had appeared when she graduated from college. It did not seem to matter greatly to her that she swam in the wake of a much more visible, powerful swimmer, since without him, she might well have sunk. And without her, he certainly would have been a far less successful high diver.

NOTES

¹Doris Fleischman Bernays, "Plus Ca Change, Plus C'Est La Meme Chose," Phantasm, Sept.-Oct. 1977, 3.

²Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 167-68.

³Edward Bernays, 'Father of Public Relations' and Leader in Opinion Making, Dies at 103," New York Times, March 10, 1995, A12.

⁴The only published scholarly works on Fleischman have appeared within the past year: Susan Henry, "Anonymous in Her Own Name: Public Relations Pioneer Doris E. Fleischman," Journalism History 23 (Summer 1997): 50-62, and Susan Henry, "Dissonant Notes of a Retiring Feminist: Doris E. Fleischman's Later Years," Journal of Public Relations Research 10 (Winter 1998): 1-33.

⁵Edward L. Bernays, Biography of An Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 49-62.

⁶Transcript of Edward L. Bernays oral history (1971), Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, New York, N.Y., 448.

⁷Bernays describes these early years at length in Biography of An Idea, 62-152. The quotes are on pages 102 and 75.

⁸Ibid, 155-78. For a good description of the work of the CPI, see Stuart Ewen, PR! A Social History of Spin (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 102-27.

⁹See, for example, Ewen, 126-33; Scott Cutlip, The Unseen Power: Public Relations. A History (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 105-06; Alan R. Raucher, Public Relations and Business, 1900-1929 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 73-74; Richard S. Tedlow, Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business, 1900-1950 (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1979), 40-41.

¹⁰Edward L. Bernays oral history transcript, 60-62.

¹¹Ibid., 61-66; Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 187-94. Specific dates are from a chronology of his activities prepared by Bernays in box I: 498, Edward L. Bernays Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter LC).

¹²In her published and unpublished writings, Fleischman never mentioned any jobs held in 1913. She always began describing her employment history by discussing her work at the New York Tribune starting in 1914. In interviews with this author, though, Bernays said her first job was doing fundraising and publicity for a "charity" devoted to "taking care of women." But he said he told her "she could learn nothing there," encouraged her to enter journalism, and introduced her to a reporter at the New York Telegram, who helped her get her job at the Tribune. See interviews with Edward L. Bernays, March 26, 1988, and March 29, 1988, Cambridge, Mass.

¹³It is exceedingly difficult to clearly chart the details of Fleischman's professional work before she was hired by Bernays. In most interviews and in their own writings, both Fleischman and Bernays maintained that she worked at the Tribune between 1914 and 1919, when she left to join Bernays. (Occasionally, she said she had started at the Tribune in 1913, soon after graduating from Barnard.) But her donated clippings files contain no Tribune articles with her byline before November 1, 1914; the last is dated March 19, 1916. See carton 1, file 2, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women, Cambridge, Mass. (hereafter Schlesinger Library). This file, although it does not contain all that Fleischman wrote for the Tribune, gives a good sense of how productive she was during some weeks.

Stronger evidence that she left the Tribune in 1916 is found in the brief biographies she (or Bernays) wrote to accompany her chapters in books each of them edited. Both sources, written in the 1920s, identify her as working at the Tribune from 1914 to 1916. See Doris E. Fleischman, ed., Careers for Women: A Practical Guide to Opportunity for Women in American Business (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1928), 384, and Edward L. Bernays, ed., An Outline of Careers: A Practical Guide to Achievement by Thirty-Eight Eminent Americans (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1927), opposite page 423.

Fleischman describes her Tribune work in Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 167-69, and in unused notes for A Wife Is Many Women, carton 1, file 33, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library. Her press pass for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition is in box I: 3, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

¹⁴Telephone interview with Camille Roman, Nov. 20, 1995.

¹⁵Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 26, 1986, Cambridge, Mass; Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 167-68; Doris Fleischman Bernays, "Plus Ca Change, Plus C'Est La Meme Chose," 3; Doris E. Fleischman, "Woman at the Lightweight Championship," New York Tribune, March 14, 1915.

¹⁶Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988, Cambridge, Mass. A few documents related to this work are in addenda, file 1, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

¹⁷Audiotape of interview with Doris Fleischman Bernays by MaryAnn Yodelis, July 1973, Cambridge, Mass. A few documents related to this work for the New York Dispensary are in addenda, file 1, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

¹⁸Fleischman's byline appears on articles about Lithuania and the servicemen's re-employment campaign published by newspapers in April, June and July—all before Bernays opened his office. See clippings in box III: 3, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC, and addenda, file 1, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

¹⁹Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 169; "Doris and I" (a section in Bernays's notes for Biography of An Idea), 1-4, box I: 462, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

²⁰Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 170.

²¹Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 188-92; "Finding My Way" (a section in Bernays's notes for Biography of An Idea), 1-22, box I: 461, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC; Edward L. Bernays oral history transcript, 61-66.

²²Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 193-94; interview with Edward L. Bernays, October 29, 1989, Cambridge, Mass. Murray Bernays, born Murray Cohen, married Bernays's sister Hella in 1917 and shortly afterwards had his name legally changed to Murray C. Bernays to keep his wife's family name alive. Edward Bernays had said he would never marry, and all his siblings were female. Murray Bernays was divorced from Hella Bernays in 1924 but kept her last name. See "Murray Bernays, Lawyer, Dead; Set Nuremberg Trials Format," New York Times undated clipping (probably 1970s), box III:6, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

²³Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 38.

²⁴Elizabeth Kemper Adams, Women Professional Workers (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), 307.

²⁵Catherine Filene, ed., Careers for Women (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1920; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1974), 19.

²⁶Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 38.

²⁷Edward L. Bernays oral history transcript, 72.

²⁸Bernays describes some of his clients during this time in Biography of An Idea, 194-199; the quote is on p.195. Also see chronology, box I: 498, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC, and receipt from H.P. Inman of the Lithuanian National Council for work done by Bernays, Aug. 19, 1919, box III:6, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

²⁹Bernays, Biography of an Idea, 199.

³⁰Walker Gilmer, Horace Liveright: Publisher of the Twenties (New York: David Lewis, 1970), 10-20; "Boni and Liveright-Book Publishers-Publicity Campaign" (a section in Bernays's notes for Biography of An Idea), box I:457, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

³¹John Tebbel, A History of Book Publishing in the United States, vol. III (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1978), 136, 138.

³²Bernays, Biography of an Idea, 277-78.

³³Ibid, 284; "Boni and Liveright-Book Publishers-Publicity Campaign," 8-11; the quote, taken from the foreword to the First Supplementary Catalog, is on p. 11.

³⁴Letter from Edward L. Bernays to the Feature Editor of the Detroit Free Press, Nov. 13, 1919, box I:120, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

³⁵Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 280-81; "Boni and Liveright-Book Publishers-Publicity Campaign," 21-26.

³⁶Edward L. Bernays, Crystallizing Public Opinion (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923; repr., New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1961), 195.

³⁷Ibid, 137.

³⁸"Boni and Liveright-Book Publishers-Publicity Campaign," 16-17; Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 282. Some of these releases are in box I:120, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

³⁹"Boni and Liveright-Book Publishers-Publicity Campaign," 14-20.

⁴⁰Gilmer, 26, 63; Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 282-83.

⁴¹Ann Douglas, Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 68.

⁴²Gilmer, 90. A large in-house advertising staff apparently took over all further promotional activities during the rest of the 1920s.

⁴³Douglas, 67-71; Edward L. Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 286.

⁴⁴Tebbel, 335-36.

⁴⁵Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 287.

⁴⁶Ibid, 288.

⁴⁷See, for example, *ibid*; Edward L. Bernays, Public Relations (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 78-79; Edward L. Bernays, "Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel: Principles and Recollections," Business History Review 45 (Autumn 1971): 301-02; interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986, Cambridge, Mass;

⁴⁸Charles Flint Kellogg, NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, vol. 1 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 137, 245-46; Mary White Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 177.

⁴⁹Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 208-11; "The NAACP-1920" (a section in Bernays's notes for Biography of An Idea), 1-16, box I:459, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁵⁰"The NAACP-1920," 17.

⁵¹Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988.

⁵²"The NAACP-1920," 19-20; Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 211-13; Bernays oral history transcript, 236;

⁵³Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 212-14; "The NAACP-1920," 20-22, 32-39.

⁵⁴Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 170.

⁵⁵"The NAACP-1920," 18.

⁵⁶Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 211.

⁵⁷Quoted in "The NAACP-1920," 39.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 25A-27, 29.

⁵⁹Ovington, 178.

⁶⁰"The NAACP-1920," 35-37.

⁶¹Ovington, 178.

⁶²Walter White to Mr. E. L. Bernays, July 13, 1920, box III:6, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁶³According to Bernays in "The NAACP-1920," 53.

⁶⁴Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 215.

⁶⁵Doris Fleischman Bernays, transcript of a speech to the Radcliffe Club [1962], 11, carton 1, file 39, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁷Interviews with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988, and May 28, 1986, Cambridge, Mass; interview with Anne Bernays, May 27, 1986, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶⁸Information on clients for these years can be found in the alphabetically arranged client files, boxes I:56-421, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC, and in Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 187-252.

⁶⁹Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 188. The release titled "Radium Becoming a Household Aid," is in box III:3, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁷⁰Bernays, Public Relations, 81.

⁷¹Bernays, "The Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel," 301.

⁷²Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988; "Doris and I," (a section in Bernays's notes for Biography of An Idea), 7, box I: 461, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁷³Undated (probably February 1921) memo from Doris E. Fleischman to Edward L. Bernays, box I:4, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁷⁴Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988.

⁷⁵Bernays oral history transcript, 99.

⁷⁶Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986.

⁷⁷Although Bernays wrote very specifically about his 1919 staff and facilities, he had little to say about his later offices, so they cannot be described in the same kind of detail. The best evidence of the size of his 1921 office is in a memo dated January 9, 1923, which is addressed to ten employees. See "Memorandum to Organization from E.L.B. and J.M.T.," box I:5, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC. Significantly, one person listed on that memo—Kathleen Goldsmith—was a writer.

⁷⁸Edward L. Bernays, Your Future in Public Relations (New York: Richards Rosen Press, 1961), 142.

⁷⁹See client files, boxes I:56-421, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC, and Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 205-252.

⁸⁰Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 205-06.

⁸¹"Junior League of the Cardiac Committee of the Public Education Association" and "Babies Hospital Benefit—1921," (sections in Bernays's notes for Biography of An Idea), box I:461, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁸²See box I:105, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁸³Bernays was adamant about this whenever it came up in several interviews with this author. Similarly, in his memoirs, he wrote that Fleischman "has done everything in public relations, except get into the direct client relationships." (Biography of An Idea, 220.)

In her own published work, Fleischman was vague about client contacts, only hinting that she met with some clients in early years. (See A Wife Is Many Women, 171.) Her unused notes for this book are more explicit. An outline listing some of the advantages and disadvantages of working with her husband includes the statement: "I made contacts before marriage, but not after." (Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, carton 1, file 19, Schlesinger Library.) But in every interview with her this author has located, she denied ever having had any contacts at any time.

⁸⁴Doris E. Fleischman to Henry Morgenthau, Jr., May 9, 1922; Henry Morgenthau, Jr., to Doris E. Fleischman, May 10, 1922, and Fleischman's follow-up-notes from their May 12 meeting, box I:746, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁸⁵[First Name Illegible] Saint-Charbin to Mademoiselle Fleischman, June 30, 1923, box III:2, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC. (My thanks to Elizabeth Burt for the translation from the French.)

⁸⁶Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988.

⁸⁷Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 171.

⁸⁸Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 221.

⁸⁹Interview with Edward L. Bernays, Oct. 26, 1989, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁰Interviews with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986 and March 29, 1988, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹¹Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 26, 1986.

⁹²Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988.

⁹³"Memorandum to Organization from E.L.B. and J.M.T.," probably written in 1922, discusses the need for Fleischman to be free at set times during the week to meet with Bernays to discuss clients. It also refers to the need to hire new people to take over "a portion of the stories and releases Miss Fleischman is now burdened with." An April 28, 1922, invoice itemizes costs related to production of one news release, listing the charge for "Miss Fleischman placing story" as \$25.00. See box I:4, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

⁹⁴Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 26, 1986. (Bernays discussed their extensive collaboration throughout their partnership in many interviews. In this one, he explicitly stated that they strategized together from the start.)

⁹⁵Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 24, 1986.

⁹⁶Bernays, "The Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel," 301.

⁹⁷Cutlip, 169.

⁹⁸Ewen, 163 and 170.

⁹⁹Interviews with Doris Bernays Held, May 27, 1986, Cambridge, Mass., Anne Bernays, Oct. 27, 1989, Cambridge, Mass., and Edward L. Bernays, May 29, 1988.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 18, 1995, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰²Bernays interview with Scott Cutlip, March 12, 1959, quoted in Cutlip, 169.

¹⁰³See footnote 82 above.

¹⁰⁴Doris E. Fleischman, "Public Relations," in Doris E. Fleischman, ed., An Outline of Careers for Women, 385-95; Doris E. Fleischman, "Public Relations: A New Field for Women," Independent Woman, Feb. 1931, 58-59, 86; Doris E. Fleischman, "Keys to a Public Relations Career," Independent Woman, Nov. 1941, 332-33, 340.

¹⁰⁵Edward L. Bernays, "Public Relations," in Edward L. Bernays, ed., An Outline of Careers, 296.

¹⁰⁶Edward L. Bernays and Doris E. Fleischman, "Public Relations as a Career," Occupations. The Vocational Guidance Magazine, Nov. 1937, 133.

¹⁰⁷Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 27, 1989.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986.

¹⁰⁹Bernays, Biography of An Idea, 289.

¹¹⁰Tedlow, 42-44. The original course description is in box I: 462, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC. Tedlow describes the final exam on p. 54, f72. Bernays's salary for teaching the course was \$200; student tuition was \$20.

¹¹¹Raucher, 103.

¹¹²In his 1971 oral history (transcript, p. 77) Bernays calls Crystallizing Public Opinion "our first book." Two secondary sources also refer to Fleischman's involvement in conceptualizing this book: Cutlip, 178, and Eric F. Goldman, Two-Way Street: The Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel (Boston: Bellman Publishing Company, 1948), 18. But these assertions of her contributions seem to be based more on the authors' assumptions than on explicit statements from Bernays. My own conclusion, based on knowledge of their relationship in 1921 and 1922, is that they discussed much that went into the book as he wrote it, and that she helped a great deal in forming its key ideas.

¹¹³Audiotape of Doris Fleischman Bernays interview with MaryAnn Yodelis.

¹¹⁴For a detailed description of their "twenty-four-hour-a-day partnership" following their 1922 marriage, see Henry, "Anonymous in Her Own Name: Public Relations Pioneer Doris E. Fleischman," 54-60.

¹¹⁵Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 167.

¹¹⁶Unused notes for A Wife Is Many Women, carton 1, file 25, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

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**High Tech vs. High Concepts:
A Survey of Technology Integration in U.S. Public Relations Curricula**

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Running head: Survey of U.S. Public Relations Curricula

High Tech vs. High Concepts: A Survey of Technology Integration in U.S. Public Relations Curricula

INTRODUCTION

A perennial issue in the journalism and mass communication professions is whether students are acquiring the skills they need to enter and thrive in an ever-changing work environment. Many studies have examined the coorientation, or lack thereof, between the body of knowledge educators teach their students and the skills professionals believe students should master (AEJMC, 1995; Davenport, 1990; Gunaratne & Lee, 1996; Grunig, 1989; Heath, 1990; Johnson, 1992; Wakefield & Cottone, 1987; Yovovich, 1996). In 1988 the Public Relations Body of Knowledge Task Force listed 32 publications, dating back to the 1970s, that examined the status of public relations education relative to the needs of the workplace.

More recently, concerns have centered around the use of new technology by journalists and public relations practitioners (Cameron, Curtin, Hollander, Nowak, & Shamp, 1996; Curtin & Cameron, 1995; Haas, 1995; Information, 1995; Paster, 1995; PR Journal, 1995; Ross & Middleburg, 1997) and whether schools of journalism and mass communication are adequately preparing students to function in cyberspace (Guiniven, 1998; Gustafson & Thomsen, 1996; Singer et al., 1996; Smethers, 1998). Anecdotal evidence suggests that public relations practitioners are depending on entry-level hires to provide leadership in the area of new technology (e.g., PR Day, 1996), while maintaining the traditional knowledge and skills considered essential for public relations work (Ryan, 1997).

This study presents the findings from the first of a two-phase study: (1) examining the role of new technology in the public relations curricula of U.S. colleges and universities, and (2) the expectations of those in charge of hiring for public relations positions concerning new employees' technology skills and knowledge. The findings reported here are from an electronic mail (e-mail) survey of institutions listing a public relations major, sequence, or emphasis in the 1997-1998 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication directory. The purpose was to determine what technologies these public relations programs teach and use, what technological resources they have, and what factors influence the decision-making dynamics that affect adoption and diffusion of new technology within the curriculum. The second phase of the study will

comprise a survey of employers of new graduates to assess their needs and expectations of new hires and compare those with the preparation students are receiving in their public relations programs. For as David Ferguson, senior consultant for Hill & Knowlton, stated, practitioners and educators must create partnerships to adequately prepare students for the profession: "It is essential that mutual respect be developed between those who teach and those who practice public relations" (in Thomsen, 1997, p. 16).

BACKGROUND

The literature concerning new technology and its place in public relations curricula spans a number of areas, including professionals' and educators' perspectives; gender, age, and anxiety issues; and the adoption and diffusion of new technology throughout an organization. These areas are reviewed in turn.

Public Relations Professionals and New Technology

Ross and Middleburg (1997) have conducted four annual Media in Cyberspace studies of the use of new technology by journalists and the changing demands new technology places on public relations practitioners. Some of the most recent findings include the increasing use by journalists of corporate Web sites for press releases, fact sheets, or to stay current during a major news event or crisis; their increasing use of e-mail to maintain relationships and receive story pitches; their increasing use of on-line databases for information retrieval; and the proliferation of on-line publishing outlets and story-breaking in the on-line media.

These findings do not, however, suggest that technological skills can or ever will completely replace the more traditional writing and personal communication skills necessary to the practice of public relations. Ross and Middleburg (1997) note the fuller integration of new technology into situations where technological and traditional skills complement each other:

In a crisis situation reporters will seek out live spokespeople first as might be expected, but indicate they will go online to enrich and expand upon their stories. In fact, the use of company Web sites elevates significantly during crises and non-business hours.

In a recent special report on "PR On the Net," practitioner Shelli Ryan, APR, pointed out that the difference is one of process rather than basic knowledge.

The Internet has not affected the core skills associated with doing my job, but it has changed the process. It is my first source for quick, cost-effective information. Whether I use it to monitor a crisis for a client or pursue an online journalist, the Internet helps me spend less time trying to find the information and more time being the one with the information." (in *PR Tactics*, 1997, p. 27).

Thomsen (1995), in a series of focused interviews with practitioners, found that they could identify emerging issues earlier and help their organizations be more proactive by using on-line database services. Remsik (1996), who surveyed marketing and public relations personnel at Wisconsin companies, found that 80% of respondents used broadcast fax services, 53% e-mail, 53% 800 lines, 21% on-line databases, 12% Nexis/Lexis, and 9% DataTimes. Stoner and Cartwright (1997) noted the increasing demand for Web sites by alumni, media, donors, and students from the public relations offices of universities. Dibb, Smikin, and Vancini (1996), in a study of international public relations, concluded:

Increases in the speed of information transfer have affected greatly the ways in which PR consultancies do business. . . . while PR practitioners have been wordsmiths in the past, visual application software and changing technology have opened up a range of new possibilities for PR consultants. There is a widespread agreement that technology is going to change the face of PR and the daily working practices of PR practitioners. To what extent is very much an unknown quantity!

Pavlik and Dozier (1996) concur. As a result of their year-long investigation of issues related to the information superhighway and their impact on the practice of public relations, they concluded that, while the World Wide Web is a magnificent tool for building relationships between an organization and its publics, it can also pose "a dangerous threat to organizational well being." (p. 3). In addition to outlining many of the management issues public relations practitioners must face regarding use of the Internet (i.e., who controls the Web site within an organization, employees who post their own sites at odds with the organizational image, and more educated and active external publics), they state: "Little is known with great certainty about the future of the information superhighway except that the pace of technological change is likely to continue to accelerate" (p. 9).

What these practitioners and academics have documented is the need not for a change in the core skills being taught students but an addition in the techniques used to access, supply, and monitor information. It is these issues of information processing that have provided the impetus for academic studies of new technology in the academy in recent years.

Public Relations Educators and New Technology

As new communications technologies have emerged, so have the challenges and opportunities within communications curricula. Elasmr and Carter (1996) surveyed freshman university students to determine their attitudes toward and use of e-mail technology prior to installation of a campus-wide e-mail system. They recommended that journalism faculty encourage the adoption and use of the technology through its integration into the curriculum, such as using course listservs or encouraging students to ask questions via e-mail.

A plethora of studies have examined the merits and challenges of teaching computer-assisted reporting techniques in schools of journalism and mass communication (Drueke & Streckfuss, 1996; Elasmr & Carter, 1996; Gunaratne & Lee, 1996; Ketterer, 1998; Singer et al., 1996). While this study examines the integration of technology into public relations classrooms, two of these computer-assisted reporting studies merit further mention. Hollerbach (1998) surveyed department chairs of ACEJMC-accredited schools and managing editors of newspapers that had won awards for investigative journalism and found a strong correlation between the types of computer-assisted reporting skills taught by schools and demanded by editors: Internet use, database use, data acquisition, spreadsheet use, and statistical analysis. Gunaratne and Lee (1996) provided a schedule and outline for integrating Internet usage into reporting, copy editing, and international communication classes.

Gustafson and Thomsen (1996) provided similar guidance for public relations and advertising curricula. They suggested unique opportunities exist for educators to combine computer technology and traditional course work without necessarily straining the available resources of a given college or university, such as incorporating the use of e-mail for collaboration between students and for reporting to the instructor on group projects and using electronic information services and databases for information searches. In conclusion, Gustafson and Thomsen (1996) argue:

The Internet will gradually change the way business is conducted around the world.... It will affect the way companies communicate internally and externally.... These changes provide both new challenges and opportunities to public relations and advertising instructors.... There are myriad ways to meaningfully incorporate the use of the Internet in campaign and techniques courses. The results are better teamwork, an improved end product, and a more real-world experience. (pp. 41-42)

Guiniven (1998) surveyed top public relations executives of Fortune 500 companies. While these executives rated good writing skills, oral communication, and an understanding of an organization's goals and objectives ahead of being able to use desktop publishing or Internet skills, one respondent also noted: "With young people, it's a given that they know the Internet and desktop publishing. They're tools of their generation, just like typing was for ours. It's their commonness that makes them less important" (p. 54).

One concern driving this study is that educators and employers alike may assume that it is "a given" that students will develop a range of computer and Internet skills on their own and do not need formal instruction in these areas as part of the formal curriculum—an assumption that the evidence does not necessarily support (Cameron & Curtin, 1992).

Diffusion and Adoption Issues

Studies in the 1980s (e.g., Griswold, 1985) profiled new technology users as young, male electronic innovators and speculated that home computers would create widening age and gender gaps. By the early 1990s, however, that profile was changing, with increasing numbers of women and people over the age of 55 adopting personal computers and on-line information services (Steinberg, 1993). A recent study sponsored by IBM and the National Foundation for Women Business Owners found that women are adopting new technology at a rate surpassing that of males. For example, 23% of women business owners have a home page compared to 16% of male-run enterprises; 47% of women subscribe to an on-line service compared to 40% of men; and 51% of women frequently use the Internet for business communications compared to 40% of men ("Women and the Net," 1997). Some recent surveys still suggest that an age and gender gap is developing, with the Internet populated predominantly by younger, male users

(Commercenet/Nielsen, 1996), although other research suggests this trend may be exaggerated (Cameron et al., 1996).

Early studies also chronicled the role of computer anxiety in the adoption of new technology, with math skills, age, and previous experience emerging as factors contributing to anxiety levels (Griswold, 1985; Mahmood & Medewitz, 1989). Recent literature, however, suggests that as new technology becomes more prevalent, this trend is also changing. What may be feared now is not the technology itself but the rapidity of change and resulting learning curve (Harmon & Sawyer, 1990), which may leave even early adopters feeling left behind in the rapidly advancing world of cyberspace (White & Schleb, 1998).

Studies have also suggested that new technology may diffuse through an organization not as the result of a considered business plan, or in this application curriculum guide, but as the result of a movement by those in the lower ranks of employees. Those individuals within an organization viewed as being technically adept often set the technological standards for the organization as a whole, which may result in a restructuring of management's long-term business plans and goals to incorporate the chosen technology (Yetton, Johnston, & Forster, 1997). In some instances, however, such a bottom-up approach may be necessary to overcome reluctance on the part of management to adopt technology at all (Huntington, 1997).

Research Questions

Because this study is exploratory in nature, the following research questions, rather than formal hypotheses, were formulated based on the literature reviewed above.

1. What computer skills and technologies are students in public relations sequences in U.S. colleges and universities required to master as part of their required public relations curriculum?
2. What role does scope of available resources and gender and age of educators in charge of public relations programs play in determining what skills and technologies students are required to master? What role do these same factors play in determining what skills and technologies are most useful for students to know?
3. Who makes decisions regarding the adoption of computer technologies in public relations curriculum and how does this affect educational opportunities for students?

METHODOLOGY

Survey Instrument

A 41-question survey instrument comprising seven categorical questions about the public relations program, sixteen 5-point numerical frequency-scaled questions concerning new technology skills and competencies in the curricula, eight categorical questions about available computer technology, and eight demographic questions was constructed (Appendix A). A question concerning job markets for graduates was included to help define the sample for the second phase of the study. A final open-ended question invited respondent input.

The questions were based on concerns expressed in the literature and were designed to provide a baseline knowledge of the offerings in and expectations of new technology skills in public relations programs. The measures, then, were not based on a previously validated scale, but they were pretested with 11 public relations educators who filled out the questionnaire and discussed concerns with the researchers. Based on these discussions, the wording of one question was clarified. Additionally, as discussed in more detail below, many respondents provided copious additional written information of a frank nature, contributing to increased reliability and validity. This phenomenon is consonant with the work of Kiesler and Sproull (1986), who found that responses to electronic surveys provoked less courtesy bias and more "honest" answers.

Sample

All 264 colleges and universities in the 1997-98 Directory for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication listed as having a public relations emphasis, sequence, or major or a Public Relations Student Society of America or International Association of Business Communicators chapter were targeted. Seven schools were subsequently dropped from the target population because they did not currently offer a public relations program, leaving 257 schools. For these schools, their Web sites and the AEJMC, ICA, and PRSA membership directories were searched to find the names and e-mail addresses of the head of the public relations sequence or the primary public relations educator at each school. Names and/or viable e-mail addresses could not be determined for individuals at 41 schools following a rigorous search,¹ leaving 216 schools total.

¹ Efforts are underway to reach these schools via telephone or mail to provide as complete a survey of public relations curricula as possible.

Notification of the survey was e-mailed to each school, giving the purpose of the study, encouraging response, and offering the incentive of shared results at the end. In some instances the premailing resulted in a request for the survey to be e-mailed to a more appropriate respondent; other individuals requested that the survey be faxed or mailed to them because of technical difficulties with their e-mail systems. The survey was sent out approximately three days after the original notification with a brief introduction and directions on how to reply via e-mail or by printing out the survey and mailing it back. A follow-up message and second copy of the survey were sent to non-respondents approximately two weeks after receipt of the first survey. All respondents were promised confidentiality, and the research was cleared through the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

Response times varied from several hours to several weeks, with most respondents replying within one to three days of receipt. E-mail responses were acknowledged with a brief reply to confirm receipt. Raw survey data were entered in SPSS, proofed, and frequency analyses, correlations, and *t*-tests were performed.

RESULTS

Respondents

As of this writing, 135 individuals representing different colleges and universities had replied, for a response rate of 62.5%. The schools they represent range from small, private liberal arts colleges to flagship universities of large state systems. Twenty respondents (14.8%) chose to print out and mail their survey back rather than e-mail it. This subset of the sample was significantly less likely to own a home computer than were those who responded via e-mail ($t = 1.07$; $d.f. = 128$; $p = .04$), which may indicate that the survey was completed outside of regular work hours. One respondent who tried unsuccessfully to reply by e-mail wrote on his completed, mailed survey that "Your survey doesn't work," thus confusing the instrument with the functions of his e-mail reader. A total of 59 respondents (43.7%) volunteered copious additional information on the surveys; the e-mail reply function apparently allowed them to readily elaborate on their numeric responses. The results presented here, then, include not just the statistical analyses of the data but exemplary quotes received as well.

The four respondents (3%) who reported not using computers in any of their public relations class work were employed in a variety of settings, including a public relations sequence, an advertising and public relations department, and a journalism and public relations department. Their programs employed from one or fewer full-time faculty to three, and from no part-time faculty up to eight. The only shared characteristics were having fairly large numbers of undergraduates compared to the number of faculty and few to no masters students. Demographics were not gathered from these respondents; instead, they were asked to simply return their surveys without attempting to complete additional questions.

Of the remaining 131 respondents, 43.5% were female and 56.5% male. They ranged in age from 27 to 68 years of age, with 48 as the median. Almost 80% had been with their current organizations 15 years or fewer, and not quite 75% had been involved in public relations education for the same length of time. From these statistics and from comments volunteered on the surveys, it was evident that many respondents had started teaching in a related area and had taken on public relations courses after the start of their professorial careers or were heads of departments in charge of the public relations classes who did not themselves teach public relations classes.

Correlation data indicate that the number and position of women in supervisory positions in public relations education is similar to that of women in the profession (Wright, Grunig, Springston, & Toth, 1991). Being female significantly correlated with being an instructor ($R = -.25$; $p = .003$), with having fewer years experience in public relations education ($R = .24$; $p = .007$), and with being younger ($R = -.21$; $p = .045$). Women were significantly more likely than males to be instructors ($t = 2.99$; $d.f. = 129$; $p = .000$), to have other job titles such as intern coordinator ($t = 1.53$; $d.f. = 129$; $p = .002$), and not to be assistant professors ($t = 1.12$; $d.f. = 129$; $p = .023$) or department heads ($t = 1.14$; $d.f. = 129$; $p = .021$). Older respondents were significantly more likely to be male ($t = 2.03$; $d.f. = 91$; $p = .001$) and, as would be expected, to be associate or full professors and department heads.

Respondents were asked to indicate all applicable job titles: 8.4% noted instructor, 26% assistant professor, 35.1% associate professor, and 24.4% professor. Sequence coordinator was indicated in 24 cases (18.3%), and department head in 39 cases (29.8%). Other titles accounted for seven cases (5.3%). A total of 91.5% of respondents said their departments used e-mail as a

regular communication channel, while 6.9% said they did not. Two respondents said they did not know if their departments did or not—one was an instructor and the other a Dean. Only seven respondents (5.3%) reported not having a home computer; of those who did, 75% had Internet access from home and 84.7% reported devoting at least half or more of their at-home computer time to work issues. No significant differences were noted in home computer ownership and Internet access between older and younger and male and female respondents.

Public Relations Programs

Most respondents worked at schools with a public relations sequence (39.3%) or emphasis (17.8%). Stand-alone public relations departments accounted for only 3.7% of respondents' work venues. Public relations and advertising departments accounted for 6.7%; and public relations and journalism departments were more common at 9.6%. Twenty-three percent fell into other categories.

A total of 42.2% of respondents reported having one or fewer full-time public relations educators in their programs. As one respondent explained, "Our full-time faculty . . . are primarily assigned to other emphases, but are qualified to and do teach courses in the pr sequence." Another 30.4% reported have two; together these two categories accounted for over two-thirds of respondents (median = 2). Another 11.9% reported three full-time public relations educators, with totals up to eight accounting for the remaining 15.6%. The distribution for part-time educators was similar, with a skew toward slightly higher numbers of part-time faculty. Three or fewer part-time educators accounted for more than three-fourths (77.5%) of respondents, with totals up to eight part-time educators reported.

Just over one-third (35.3%) of respondents reporting having 50 or fewer undergraduates enrolled in their public relations programs; another 27.8% reported having 51 to 100 undergraduates. The remaining 36.8% reported having 101 undergraduates or more, with five respondents indicating their programs enrolled more than 200 undergraduate public relations students. Over two-thirds (80%) reported having fewer than 10 masters students (including those with no graduate program). Another 10% had 11 to 20 masters students; the remaining 10% were evenly split between those with 21 to 30 masters students and those with more than 30.

Computer Skills Prerequisites

A total of 53.8% of respondents reported having a computer skills prerequisite for their classes. Five of those mentioned it was a basic typing skills class; one said it was a basic computer science class; another volunteered that a computer skills prerequisite would be instituted next year. Other respondents, however, took computer skills for granted: "Most [students] already know computers" volunteered one respondent; "No need [for a prerequisite]; students have computer skills" said another.

Those who responded that they had a computer skills requirement varied from their fellow educators who did not in a number of significant ways: they taught in smaller programs with significantly fewer full-time faculty ($t = .46$, $d.f. = 128$, $p = .054$) and smaller numbers of undergraduates enrolled in their programs ($t = .94$, $d.f. = 126$, $p = .017$). They also were significantly more likely to report other uses of computers in the classroom than the ones provided in the questions ($t = 1.15$, $d.f. = 125$, $p = .044$), to report other kinds of computer systems in use than the ones mentioned ($t = 1.32$, $d.f. = 128$, $p = .008$), and to report using DOS as an operating system ($t = 1.17$, $d.f. = 128$, $p = .018$). Those who had a computer skills prerequisite were also significantly more likely to know what kind of operating system they were using ($t = 1.25$, $d.f. = 127$, $p = .012$), to report not sharing computer facilities with other departments ($t = 1.19$, $d.f. = 128$, $p = .017$), to use e-mail as a communication channel within their department ($t = .98$, $d.f. = 127$, $p = .043$), and to report more computer hours at home spent on work-related matters ($t = 1.12$, $d.f. = 121$, $p = .010$). These results suggest that programs with a computer skills prerequisite tend to occur in smaller programs in which the people overseeing public relations education have control over the equipment and software purchased, in which computers have been in place for a relatively long time, and who are themselves computer savvy.

Computer Skills Incorporated Into Course Work

In terms of particular computer skills (i.e., word processing, desktop publishing, information searches, e-mail, statistical analysis of data, Web site creation and maintenance, project management, and time tracking), four skills emerged as required at least half the time in course work in most programs. No one marked that word processing was never required in the public relations curriculum at their school. A total of 88.5% of respondents noted that it was required always or frequently, while another 8.5% said it was required about half the time ($M =$

4.54; S.D. = .78; 1 = never). Only 3.0% of respondents said it was seldom required in their classroom work. Females were significantly more likely than males to report requiring word processing skills ($t = 2.45$; d.f. = 128; $p = .010$); in fact, females reported higher means for all skills requirements with the exception of time tracking software (Figure 1).

Using computers for information searches was the next most frequently reported skill required, with over half the respondents (50.4%) reporting their students must do so frequently or always. Just 3% said they never required students to use computers for this task, and 16.5% said they seldom did so. The remaining 29.9% reported doing so about half the time ($M = 3.48$; S.D. = 1.09; 1 = never; Figure 2). Two respondents volunteered that their students were getting experience in on-line research through newly instituted required computer-assisted reporting classes, which included spreadsheet use as well.

Four respondents (3%) marked that desktop publishing was never required, and 12.8% marked that it was seldom required. Just over one-third (35.2%) said it was required about half the time, and the remaining almost half of respondents (48.8%) marked that it was required frequently or always ($M = 3.47$; S.D. = 1.03; 1 = never). Women were significantly more likely to require desktop publishing skills ($t = .80$; d.f. = 123; $p = .005$) than men were (Figure 3).

The fourth most frequently required skill was using e-mail, although 14% of respondents said they never required its use in course work. Almost half of respondents (46.5%) require its use seldom to half the time, and the remaining 39.6% require it frequently or always (Figure 4). Many respondents questioned the need to require e-mail skills in the classroom because "all use e-mail," "e-mail is not required but is used [by students] quite extensively." Yet another, however, said she could not communicate with her students via e-mail because "too many students don't have e-mail accounts." While one respondent said there was "no feasible way" to incorporate e-mail into the classroom; another said "We use computers in every writing and design class and in most others. Students do their work on the computer and submit via e-mail. Papers are graded by the faculty on e-mail and sent back."

Use of the four remaining skills was ranked lower by most respondents. Over one-fourth of respondents said they never required their students to use statistical analysis software as part of their classwork, and another 34.4% noted they seldom required its use. Only 20.3% required its use about half the time; another 12.5% used it frequently and 3.7% responded that they always

required its use ($M = 2.28$; $S.D. = 1.13$; 1 = never; Figure 5). A number of respondents volunteered that they thought use of statistical analyses packages was more appropriate at the graduate level "where students are more likely to have work experience and a greater maturity." Another respondent noted that "PR students are afraid of numbers—they are math phobic. I believe this becomes a big disadvantage." Again, women were significantly more likely to require use of statistical analysis software than men were ($t = .67$; $d.f. = 126$; $p = .051$).

Creating or maintaining a Web site was required work in 57.8% of classes, with only 14.8% of respondents stating that they required such skills frequently or always. A total of 13.3% said they required it about half the time, and the remaining 29.7% said they seldom required such skills ($M = 2.078$; $S.D. = 1.23$; 1 = never; Figure 6). Older respondents were significantly more likely to require use of web page authoring and maintenance than their younger counterparts were ($t = 1.46$; $d.f. = 88$; $p = .009$).

Project management software was not required use in 57.9% of classes. Another 27.8% said they used it seldom, and 8.7% said they required it about half the time. Only five respondents (4%) said they often required its use, and two respondents (1.6%) said they always did ($M = 1.64$; $S.D. = .92$; 1 = never; Figure 7). Required use of time tracking software was mentioned by only 21.7% of respondents, with only 1.6% (2 respondents) mentioning that they required it frequently or always. A total of 17.1% used it seldom, and the remaining 3.1% reported requiring its use about half the time ($M = 1.29$; $S.D. = .64$; 1 = never; Figure 8). In this instance, women were significantly less likely than men to require its use ($t = 1.13$; $d.f. = 127$; $p = .041$). A number of respondents indicated they were not familiar with these two types of packages: "I feel like I'm out of it because I'm not familiar with project management and time tracking software."

A total of 39.1% of respondents said they used computers in the classroom for 20 applications other than the ones outlined above (Table 1). The most frequently mentioned additional uses indicate a strong visual component to many curricula: presentations, using software such as PowerPoint (15 mentions), and multimedia/video, design/layout, and graphics (four mentions each). One respondent noted, "We provide an elective course in presentation methods that covers such things as power-point (sic) presentations and which is particularly appealing to students in the advertising and public relations sequences." Interestingly, two mentions were made of PageMaker, one of research methods, and one of writing--these

respondents apparently did not consider these applications to be part of the desktop publishing, statistical analyses of data, and word processing functions respectively. Additional uses offered ranged from the novel to the mundane: mapping programs for geographical data and as a means for students to write their comprehensive exams. Older respondents were significantly more likely to report other computer uses in the classroom than were younger respondents ($t = 1.25$; $d.f. = 88$; $p = .031$).

Useful Computer Skills

When asked how useful certain computer skills would be for students, knowledge of word processing rated the highest, with a mean of 4.85 ($S.D. = .56$; 5 = most useful). Next was how to do on-line information searches ($M = 4.59$; $S.D. = .81$), followed by using e-mail ($M = 4.57$; $S.D. = .85$). Desktop publishing skills, with a mean of 4.54 ($S.D. = .83$), were ranked fourth, followed by the ability to create and maintain a Web page ($M = 3.47$; $S.D. = 1.05$) and to use statistical analysis programs ($M = 3.38$; $S.D. = 1.13$). Those applications garnering less than a medium (3.0) usefulness rating were project management software ($M = 2.79$; $S.D. = 1.05$) and time tracking software ($M = 2.44$; $S.D. = .93$). Comments volunteered indicated that some respondents downgraded Web skills because students could "hire someone" or the skills "can be learned fairly easily." The usefulness of statistical analysis software was "more realistic at the graduate level," although students "need to know the concepts."

In every instance, respondents rated the usefulness of these skills significantly higher than they did the amount of time they required them in the classroom. Additionally, in every instance women rated the usefulness of these skills higher than their male counterparts did, with significant differences recorded for word processing skills ($t = 1.01$; $d.f. = 128$; $p = .040$), web skills ($t = 1.58$; $d.f. = 126$; $p = .051$), use of statistical analysis packages ($t = .59$; $d.f. = 123$; $p = .052$), and use of time tracking software ($t = .37$; $d.f. = 124$; $p = .017$; Figure 9). Additionally, older respondents were significantly more likely than their younger counterparts to believe word processing skills ($t = 1.19$; $d.f. = 90$; $p = .017$) and e-mail skills are more useful ($t = 1.70$; $d.f. = 90$; $p = .003$). Years of experience in public relations education was significantly and positively correlated with the perceived usefulness of project management and time tracking software ($R = .226$, $p = .012$; $R = .176$, $p = .05$, respectively).

Computer Hardware and Software

The most common computer system for classroom use was the Power Mac (55%). Next most common was an IBM or IBM clone (51.9%). Respondents marked all systems that applied, thus another 45% noted that they had regular Macintosh systems in their labs as well. Two respondents marked other systems, such as a Vax mainframe, no respondents marked that they did not know what systems were in use.

While no IBM users volunteered that they were switching to Macs, four respondents noted they were planning to switch from Macs to IBMs. Some of the comments volunteered on the issue by those reporting having Macintoshes include the following: "Mac is not 'real' business world—I tell them [students] to become fluent with PCs", "We are in the process of creating better computer labs. These will be PC based and use Windows 95 and NT", "More and more of my students use IBM or IBM compatible with Windows, so since we have a Mac lab they can't use the . . . software outside of the lab." One respondent didn't volunteer a preference but implied it by wistfully asking, "You didn't ask what platform—Mac or PC—do I prefer."

When asked who decided which computer systems would be installed, most respondents said it was the decision of the head of the department (34.9%). A total of 16.7% said a technology committee decided, and 15.9% said the Dean was responsible for the decision. A centralized office was marked by 15.1% of respondents, no other category was noted by more than 10% of respondents (Table 2). A significant correlation existed between having PowerMacs and the distance of the decision maker from the department; in other words, the higher up the administrative scale the decision maker, the more likely it was that the public relations sequence would have PowerMacs for student use ($R = .177, p = .048$).

While respondents were aware of what hardware was in their labs and would volunteer a specific preference, they were less sure of themselves when indicating what operating systems were in use on these machines. While only 6.9% said they did not know, it was obvious that many more should have marked this category, with some respondents indicating they had Macs running DOS for example. Some marked the "other" category (1.5%) and specified operating systems such as Microsoft Word, Netscape Navigator, and even the American Heritage Dictionary. One respondent frankly stated:

I am not the most computer-literate guy you'll ever meet, although I know enough to survive. I am pretty much obliged to rely on others in the School of Journalism to handle most of the computer-related stuff such as equipment and programs and the proper utilization of them.

Of those marking a specific operating system category, Mac OS was the most commonly mentioned (63.4%), followed by Windows (all versions; 52.7%). A total of 9.9% indicated DOS, and 6.9% marked OS/2. Because respondents marked all that applied, the percentages total more than 100%. Women were significantly less likely to report using DOS ($t = 2.81$; d.f. = 129; $p = .000$) and to know what operating system was in use in general ($t = 1.43$; d.f. = 128; $p = .004$).

When asked who decided which operating system to use the answers were somewhat different than those given for hardware (Table 2), with the decision appearing to be somewhat further removed from the department level. The highest proportion of respondents (27.6%) said it was the head of the department's decision, and another 22% said it was the responsibility of a university-wide body. A total of 17.3% said it was a technology committee decision, and 15% said it was the Dean's responsibility. Given that the hardware chosen often dictates the choice of operating system, the lack of correlation between operating system decision makers and hardware purchase decision makers may be indicative of the confusion on the part of respondents noted above on just what constitutes an operating system and on which platforms they run.

A total of 37.7% of respondents did not list specific software programs that students should know. A few volunteered their reasoning: "skills are transferable," "there is always new software," and "variety is too diverse." One suggested some general skills and noted that "I do not believe in requiring specific brand name software, per se." Of the 61.9% that did recommend specific software, desktop publishing was mentioned most frequently (QuarkXpress, PageMaker, and MS Publisher, in that order), followed by word processing (Word, WordPerfect). Many respondents mentioned presentation software, such as PowerPoint or Persuasion, and Photoshop. Statistical analysis software was mentioned infrequently (SPSS, six mentions; SAS, one mention), and time tracking software (Time Slips) and project management software (PR Pro) were mentioned only once each. Also receiving few mentions were Web browsers, databases, spreadsheets, and drawing programs (Table 3).

The Role of Graduate Programs and Resources

Over three-fourths of respondents (76.3%) said they share their computer facilities, most frequently with the journalism department or as part of journalism school wide or university-wide computer lab facilities. Some respondents noted that a shortage of resources was responsible for a less than ideal teaching state at their schools. One said "our lack of technology is severe," another noted the trouble of trying to keep up: "We are struggling to keep up with technology. We have made significant strides in the past two years, but the truth is that you can't possibly be cutting edge. By the time you purchase the stuff it is out of date." Another pointed out that it was the donor of the hardware who decided just what that hardware would be—the decision was not an internal one.

Significant differences were noted between those schools having a small graduate program or none at all² and those with a large number of enrolled masters students. Those respondents with a large graduate program were significantly more likely to require the use of project management software in class ($t = 1.26$; d.f. = 102; $p = .046$), to believe knowing how to perform on-line information searches is useful ($t = 1.02$; d.f. = 104; $p = .039$), and to rate knowledge of e-mail as useful ($t = 1.73$; d.f. = 103; $p = .000$). In fact, all of those with large masters programs rated knowledge of e-mail as extremely useful (5) and were also significantly more likely to regularly use e-mail as an interdepartmental communication channel ($t = 1.05$; d.f. = 105; $p = .025$). The larger programs more frequently reported sharing their computer facilities with other departments ($t = 1.37$; d.f. = 104; $p = .039$), suggesting that shared facilities may be a positive resource rather than a limitation.

To explore the role of resources, an index was built combining number of full-time faculty, number of undergraduates, and number of masters students in the belief that a program with large numbers of all of the above would possess the clout to command more resources. The results of t -tests comparing those with large amounts of resources to those with few revealed exactly the same significant differences as noted above for numbers of masters students enrolled. This result is not surprising given that the three variables correlated at the $p = .000$ level.

² Schools with masters programs enrolling 10 or fewer students were considered the same as those not having a graduate program because so few students would not likely have a major impact on the curriculum and facilities.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that most educators in charge of public relations programs are well integrated with new technology, reporting at least some level of required computer skills usage in a variety of areas. Most also possess home computers and Internet access, which they frequently use for work purposes. Only four respondents reported no required computer use in their classes; and only seven respondents reported not having a home computer. In terms of the general population, the respondents qualify as new technology adopters and users—"techthusiasts" (Commercenet/Neilsen, 1996; Mitchell, 1994).

Public relations programs, however, occupy marginalized positions within many colleges and universities, which may restrict the power they have to instigate technological change. The low number of stand-alone departments, the high number of public relations programs classified in "other" sequences, the large number led by instructors, and the low number of full-time faculty and relatively higher number of part-time faculty suggest that these programs do not occupy a position of relative power. As such, they may be dependent on the whims of their superiors for necessary resources and lack the ability to set technological standards.

It should be noted, however, that the results do not suggest that bigger is necessarily better. In line with Gustafson and Thomsen's (1996) suggestions for ways in which new technologies can be integrated into the curriculum without straining existing resources, many respondents from smaller schools and state universities not known for their wealth reported innovative and heavy use of new technology skills in the classroom. Resources, then, were not a limiting factor in what could be accomplished in the classroom and the curriculum.

Greater resources were associated with the presence of a sizable masters program, but what was affected was not the innovation but the emphasis. Respondents from programs with larger masters programs were more likely to stress some applications that might be viewed as more management functions, such as the use of project management software and how to conduct on-line information searches. One respondent noted: "Undergraduate students cannot accomplish all of the educational development needed in our professional area. Management and research knowledge can best be accomplished in graduate programs." What remains unanswered is how much of this emphasis filters into the undergraduate curriculum as well. Implications for future job roles also need to be explored. If the emphasis is on word processing and desktop publishing

skills to the detriment of skills in project and time management and statistical analyses of data, we may be educating students only to fill technician roles in the profession and reserving management training only for those who take an advanced degree (Dozier, 1992).

Although respondents indicated a high degree of commitment to graphic and visual skills—more so, in fact, than the survey was well equipped to tap—respondents indicated a shift toward IBM computers from Macintoshes. The results suggest the dominance of Windows is having an effect in the academy. Particularly noteworthy was the comment that IBMs were “real world.” The second phase of this study is designed to test just such an assumption. Also noteworthy is that the further away from the lead program administrator hardware decisions are made, the more likely the decision is made to adopt PowerMacs, quite possibly because they represent the lowest common denominator that could be used by a variety of departments and support a variety of applications. Some respondents also pointed out the need to expand beyond just computer applications when considering the integration of new technology into the curriculum, such as broadcast fax and digital photography.

No evidence was found for an age gap—in fact, the results were quite the reverse. Older respondents demonstrated a commitment to new technology skills by being more likely to require Web site creation and maintenance skills and a greater variety of skills than were their younger counterparts. Additionally, they rated word processing and e-mail skills more highly than did those who were younger. Those with more years in public relations education also more highly valued skills that for many were on the fringes of the curriculum (e.g., project management software and time tracking software). It is possible that those who are older have had more time to conquer the learning curve and to integrate technology into their classes, with familiarity breeding enhanced worth in this instance. Such a notion, however, runs counter to the philosophy that younger individuals are picking up the necessary skills on their own.

Perhaps the most intriguing findings are those concerning gender. In so far as perceived utility and requirements are concerned, the gender gap is also reversed. Women consistently rated the utility of new technology skills higher than men did, and with only the exception of time tracking software indicated that the use of these skills was more integrated into the curricula they oversaw. At the same time, women were much less likely to know more of the technical details of the technology they used, such as what operating systems drove the computers they use in the

classroom. A facet that needs further exploration is whether a lack of technical knowledge contributes to a greater valuation of technical skills, explaining why women continuously valued technical expertise more. This factor may also be related to the finding that women were significantly more likely than men to report required use of word processing and desktop publishing skills. As demonstrated in the literature, women more often fill technician roles in the industry (Dozier, 1995), and, as such, may come to place more emphasis on technician skills that permeates the curriculum emphasis of programs with women in charge. Anxiety may also aggravate the problem. It was a female respondent who said she felt behind the curve because she did not know what project management and time tracking software was, indicating a lack of professional exposure to these products. The results of this survey suggest that the role of women in public relations education needs further study as to how it relates to the adoption and diffusion of new technology in the curriculum.

The larger issue, however, remains the appropriate role of technology within the public relations curriculum. Those who viewed technology as an end in itself were quick to denounce it, pointing out that "we are an academic/professional school, not a trade school." These respondents volunteered that students and educators have become too "dependent on machines," and "paralyzed" when technology goes down. For these respondents, classroom time was too precious to be wasted on teaching technological skills—they expect students to learn those on the job.

A lot of our computer-related training is done on an ad hoc basis—i.e., I will, on my own time, teach students how to use PowerPoint, Quark, or FileMaker Pro. I am reluctant to use instructional time to teach computer skills. Many of our students get their training on their own, either through internship experience, personal initiative, or through the assistance of an independent organization.

The second phase of this study will explore whether professionals are willing to hire or even grant internships to those who do not provide technological skills as part of their package.

For other respondents, technological skills were a means to an end; they represented a process to be applied, not a technique to be mastered. As one respondent noted: "When a student leaves here, he or she is prepared—not with a 'toolbox' of computer skills as much as with a mastery of current technology and the ability to adapt to—and implement—new

technology as it is developed." That hiring professionals appreciate the approach is supported in this phase of the study through anecdotal evidence only, as one respondent wrote: "All of the core courses require heavy technology usage. This system is working very well for us and our graduates." The second phase of the study is necessary to find if this assumption bears out across the nation.

What is clear is that many leaders of public relations education have firmly embraced technology as a part of the public relations curriculum. It is not a subject in and of itself, but a necessary part and parcel of preparing students for the work environment in which they will find themselves. Many viewed a variety of technical capabilities as a necessary baseline, without which students could not be considered to have received a public relations education. One respondent was quite emphatic on the topic:

As far as I am concerned, an undergraduate PR student who gets a sheepskin without becoming computer literate is useless in the working world. I would not want to graduate, nor would I hire, a PR graduate who doesn't know several types of operating systems and software, can design and layout using the computer, knows Internet publishing, and can research and crunch some basic stats with the PC.

That hiring professionals appreciate the approach is supported in this phase of the study through anecdotal evidence only. One respondent wrote: "All of the core courses require heavy technology usage. This system is working very well for us and our graduates." The second phase of the study—a nationwide survey of professionals—is necessary to find if they are willing to hire or even grant internships to those who do not provide technological skills as part of their package. The literature from the professionals reviewed earlier indicates that they consider new technology skills to enable them to do their jobs. The question remains: are these skills that hiring professionals expect their new employees to bring with them and that they will simply refine, or are hiring professionals willing to provide training in areas of new technology as part of the overhead cost of taking on a new employee?

Table 1. Computer Applications Used in Public Relations Classrooms (other than those already listed)

<u>Application</u>	<u>No. of Mentions</u>
Presentation	15
Multimedia/video	4
Design/layout	4
Graphics	4
Photography	3
PageMaker	2
Advertising design/production	2
Chat rooms	1
Research methods	1
Spreadsheets	1
Business & accounting	1
Issue monitoring	1
Database management	1
Map programs for geographic data	1
Comprehensive exams	1
Writing	1
Computer-assisted reporting	1
Distance learning programs	1
Internet publishing	1

Table 2. Primary Decision Makers for Computer and Operating System Purchases

<u>Primary Decision Maker</u>	<u>Computer Systems (%)</u>	<u>Operating Systems (%)</u>
Central university or college purchasing office	15.1	22.0
Dean	15.9	15.0
Business manager	1.6	0.0
Head of department or sequence	34.9	27.6
Individual professors	9.5	9.4
Technology committee	16.7	17.3
Other	6.3	8.7

Table 3. Specific Software Packages Students Should Master

<u>Software</u>	<u>No. of Mentions</u>
QuarkXpress	35
PageMaker	25
MicroSoft Publisher	2
(desktop publishing)*	3
Word	17
WordPerfect	10
(word processing)*	4
Photoshop	14
Illustrator	3
Freehand	1
(graphic design)*	1
PowerPoint	8
Persuasion	1
(presentation)*	1
Excel	7
QuattroPro	2
Quicken	1
(spreadsheets)*	1
Access	1
FileMaker Pro	1
FoxPro	1
dBase	1
(databases)*	1
Office '97	2
MS Works	2
SPSS	6
SAS	1
Netscape	1
Internet Explorer	1
HTML editor	2

Table 3 (cont.). Specific Software Packages Students Should Master

<u>Software</u>	<u>No. of Mentions</u>
Eudora	1
(e-mail)*	1
Windows 95	1
(Mac and IBM platforms)*	1
(programming skills)*	1
Nexis/Lexis	1
(research)*	1
Time Slips	1
Publics	1

* although respondents were asked to list specific software programs, some listed general software types.

How often word processing is required (by gender)

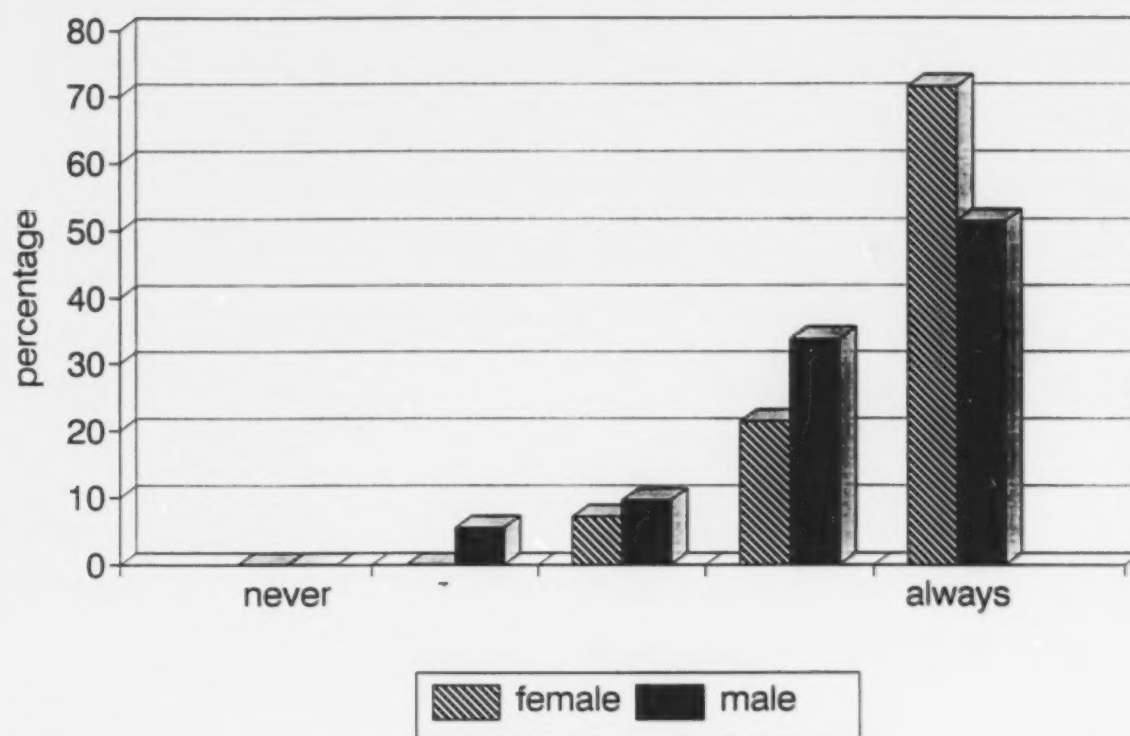


Figure 1. How often word processing is required (by gender)

How often on-line research is required (by gender)

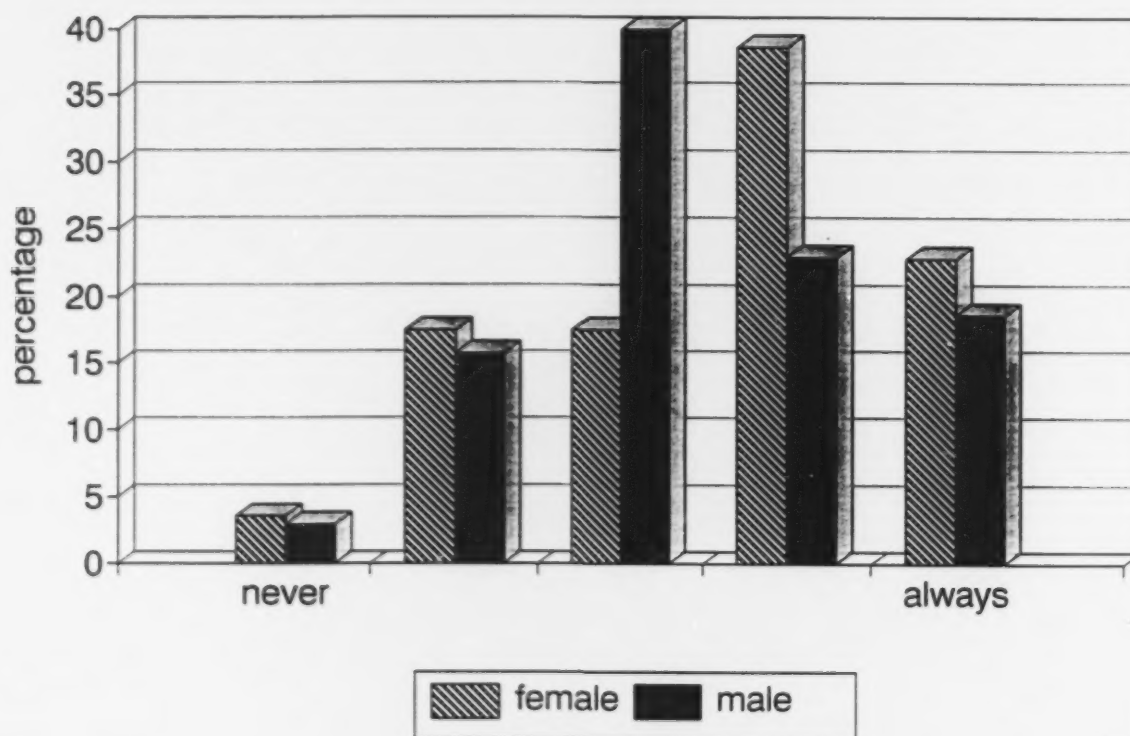


Figure 2. How often on-line research is required (by gender)

How often desktop publishing is required (by gender)

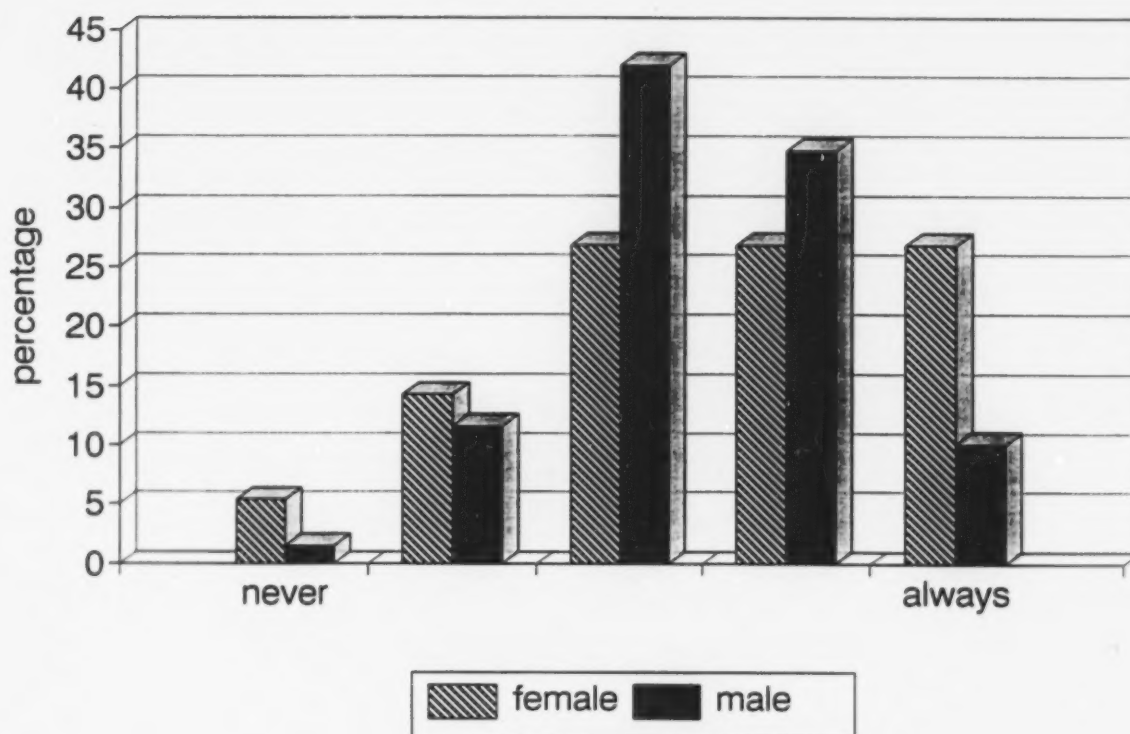


Figure 3. How often desktop publishing is required (by gender)

How often e-mail use is required (by gender)

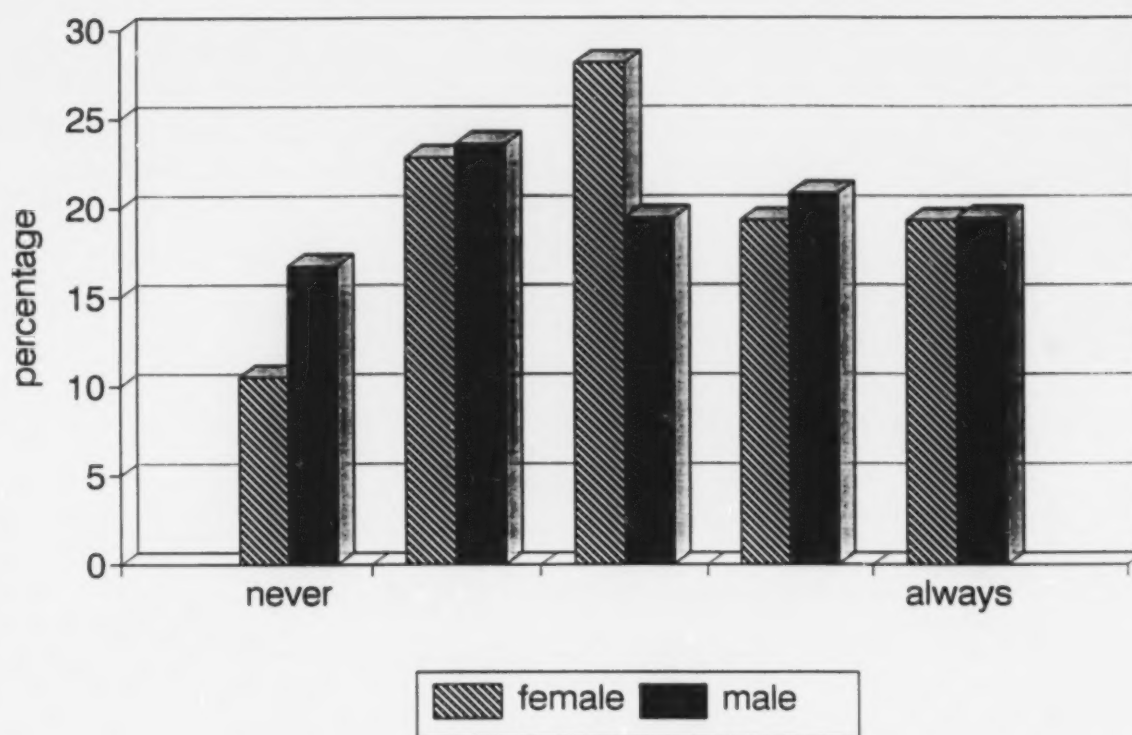


Figure 4. How often e-mail use is required (by gender)

How often computerized statistical data analysis is required (by gender)

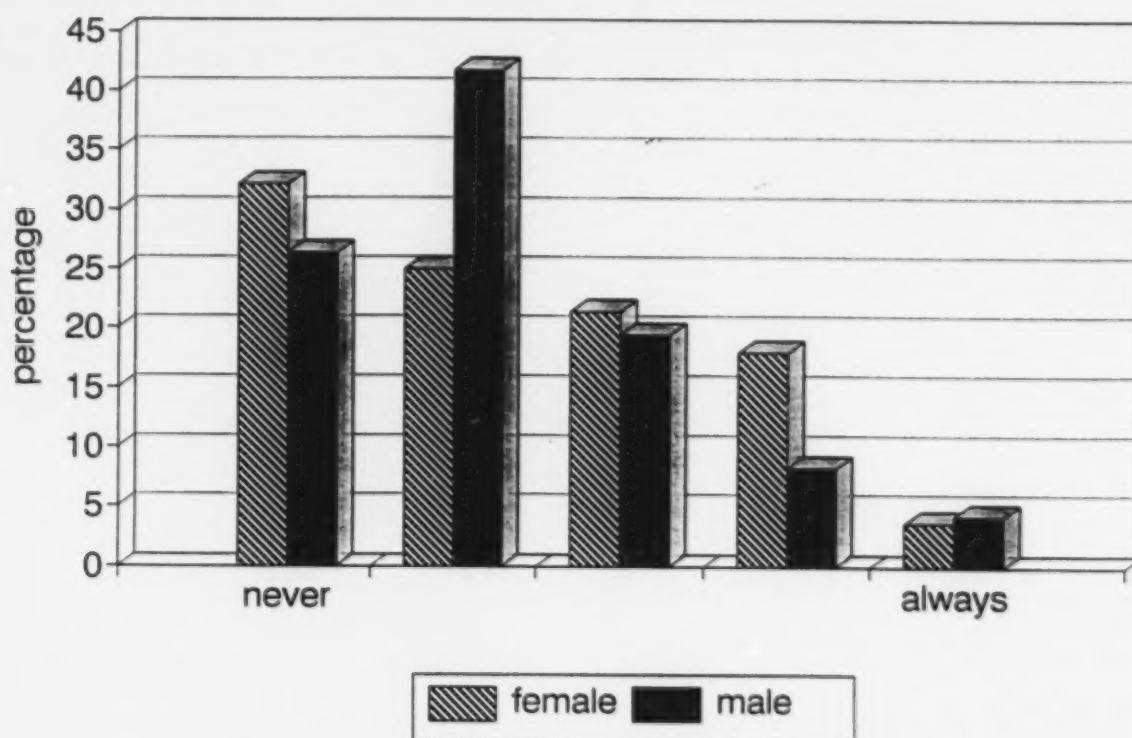


Figure 5. How often computerized statistical data analysis is required (by gender)

How often Web site creation/maintenance is required (by gender)

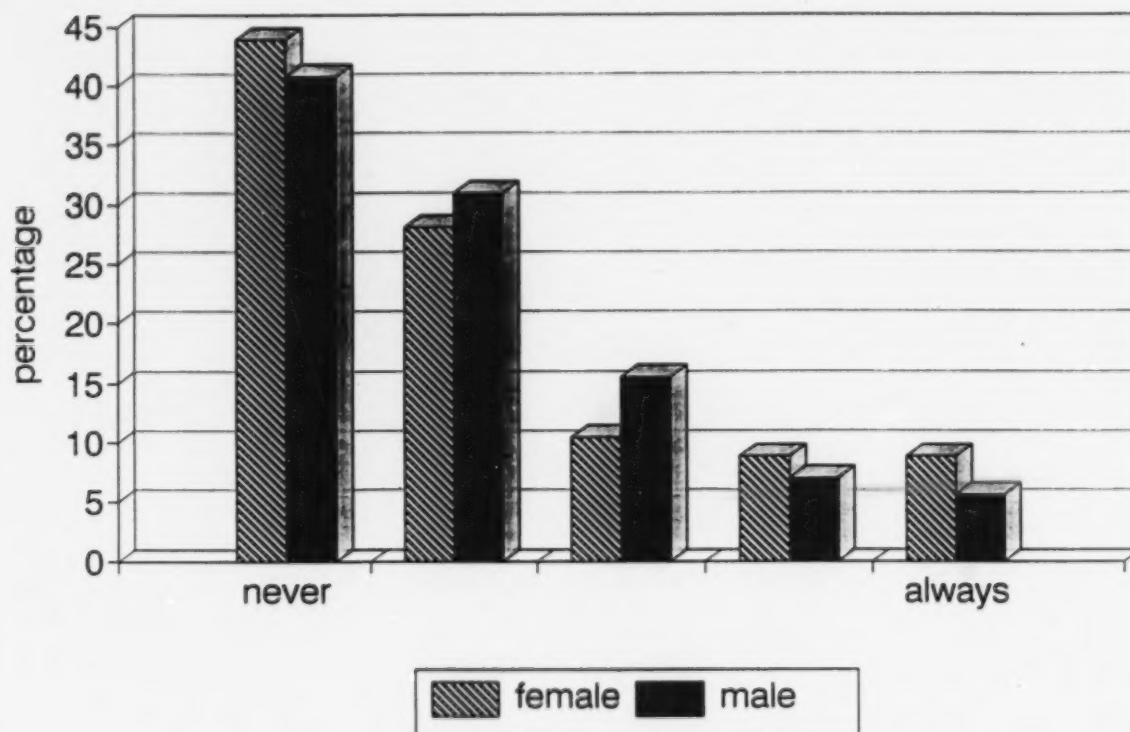


Figure 6. How often Web site creation/maintenance is required (by gender)

How often project management software is required (by gender)

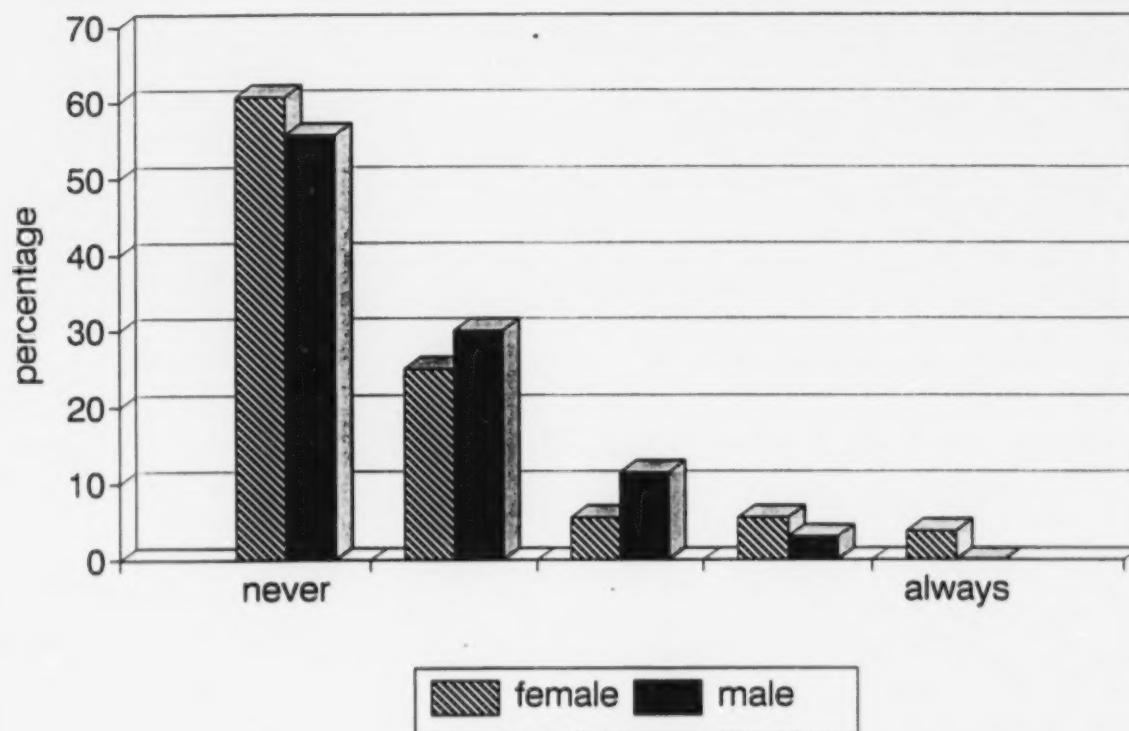


Figure 7. How often project management software is required (by gender)

How often time tracking software is required (by gender)

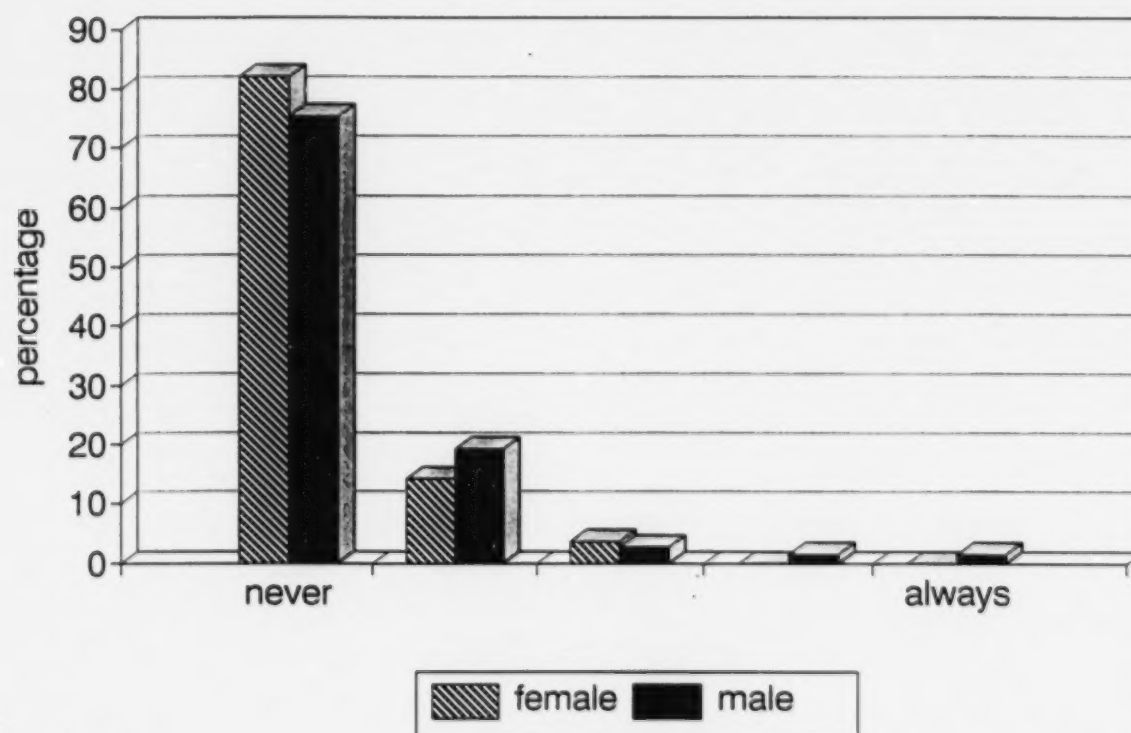


Figure 8. How often time tracking software is required (by gender)

How useful different computer skills are considered (by gender)

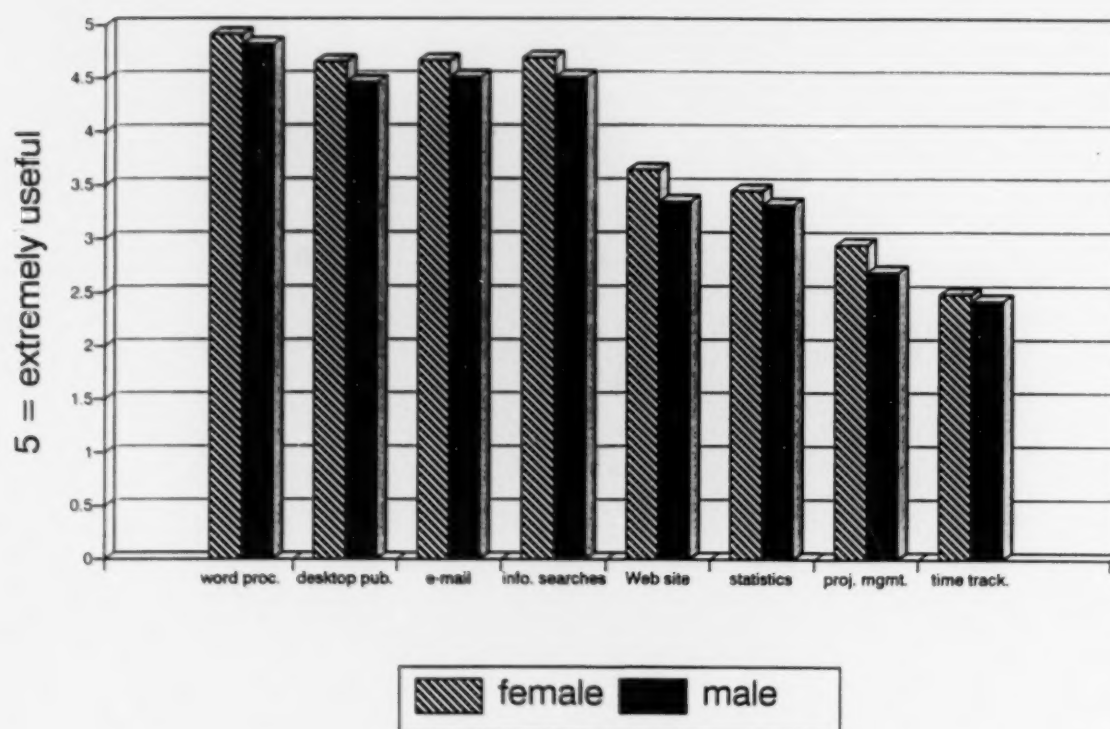


Figure 9. How useful different computer skills are considered (by gender)

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APPENDIX

E-Mail Message Sent Prior to Survey

Date:
From: Elizabeth Witherspoon <ewithers@email.unc.edu>
To:
Subject: Public Relations Study

Prof. [last name],

We are doing research on the uses of new information technology in public relations curricula. As an educator at an institution for journalism and mass communication study, your input is important to us. In the next few days, we will send you a survey by e-mail that we promise will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. If you would prefer to receive it in another format or have difficulty completing the survey by e-mail, please let us know so that we can make other arrangements.

We can be reached by either using the reply function or by calling 919-962-4091 (Dr. Pat Curtin's office). Thank you so much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Witherspoon, APR
Dr. Pat Curtin
Dr. Dulcie Straughan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Survey Instrument Sent Via E-Mail

Date:
From: Elizabeth Witherspoon <ewithers@email.unc.edu>
To:
Subject: Public Relations Study

Dear Public Relations Educator,

As educators, you worry whether you are adequately preparing your students for the professional world. We know--we do too.

We are surveying public relations professionals to determine what computer skills and training they are looking for in their new hires. We are also surveying educators to determine what skills and training public relations students are receiving in school.

Please take 15 minutes to fill out the following questionnaire on the computer training and expectations you have for your students. We will tabulate your answers as well as those from the professionals and send you the results so you can better prepare your students for public relations careers.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your answers will be confidential.

Questions? Contact us at this e-mail address [ewithers@email.unc.edu] or at (919) 962-4091 (Dr. Pat Curtin). Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Witherspoon, APR, Dr. Patricia Curtin, Dr. Dulcie Straughan

To answer the survey, please place an X in the appropriate space and return it to us at:

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Howell Hall, CB 3365
The Univ. of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3365

Or FAX: 919-962-0620

1. Which one of the following best describes the public relations program at your school or university?

- ☐ stand-alone department
- ☐ pr and advertising dept.
- ☐ pr and journalism dept.
- ☐ pr emphasis
- ☐ pr sequence
- ☐ other (please specify) _____

2. How many full-time public relations instructors (including full, associate, and assistant professors) are employed at your school?

☐ one or fewer	☐ five
☐ two	☐ six
☐ three	☐ seven
☐ four	☐ eight or more

3. How many part-time and adjunct instructors (including full, associate, and assistant professors) are employed at your school?

☐ one or fewer	☐ five
☐ two	☐ six
☐ three	☐ seven
☐ four	

4. Approximately how many undergraduate students are currently enrolled in the public relations sequence?

☐ 50 or fewer	☐ 151 to 200
☐ 51 to 100	☐ more than 200
☐ 101 to 150	

5. Approximately how many masters students are currently enrolled who have an emphasis in public relations?

☐ 10 or fewer	☐ 21 to 30
☐ 11 to 20	☐ 31 or more

6. Do students use computers in any of the public relations courses they take?

☐ yes
☐ no (if no, please stop at this point and return the survey to us)

7. Does your program have computer skill prerequisites for any of these courses?

☐ yes
☐ no

For the following questions, please place an X along the appropriate point on the five-point scale.

8. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to use word processing programs?

☐ never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ always

9. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to use desktop publishing programs?

☐ never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ always

10. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to use e-mail programs?

_____ never _____ always _____

11. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to perform on-line information searches?

_____ never _____ always _____

12. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to create or maintain a Web site?

_____ never _____ always _____

13. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to use computerized programs for the statistical analyses of data?

_____ never _____ always _____

14. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to use project management and planning software?

_____ never _____ always _____

15. In the public relations course sequence you offer, how often on average are your students required to use computerized time tracking programs?

_____ never _____ always _____

16. Are computers used in the classroom for any applications other than the ones listed above?

_____ yes (please specify) _____
_____ no

17. What kind of computer system(s) does your program use for its classrooms? (mark all that apply)

_____ IBM or compatible
_____ Macintosh (not Power Mac)
_____ Power Mac
_____ Do Not Know
_____ Other (please specify) _____

18. What operating system(s) does your program use on these computer systems? (mark all that apply)

- ☐ Windows (specify version, if known) _____
- ☐ OS/2
- ☐ DOS
- ☐ Mac OS
- ☐ Do Not Know
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

19. Who is the major decision maker concerning what kind of computers are purchased for the classrooms?

- ☐ Central University or College Purchasing Office
- ☐ Dean
- ☐ Business Manager
- ☐ Head of department or sequence
- ☐ Individual professors
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

20. Who is the major decision maker concerning what kind of computer operating systems are purchased for these computers?

- ☐ Central University or College Purchasing Office
- ☐ Dean
- ☐ Business Manager
- ☐ Head of department or sequence
- ☐ Individual professors
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

21. Are the computer facilities shared with other departments or sequences?

- ☐ Yes (please specify)
- ☐ No

For the following questions, please specify how important you believe each skill is on a scale of not at all useful to extremely useful.

22. How useful is it for graduating public relations students to be skilled in word processing?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

23. How useful is it for graduating public relations students to be skilled in desktop publishing?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

24. How useful is it for public relations students to be skilled in using e-mail?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

25. How useful is it for public relations students to be skilled in on-line information searches?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

26. How useful is it for public relations students to be skilled in creating and/or maintaining a Web site?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

27. How useful is it for public relations students to be skilled in statistical analyses of data using computer programs?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

28. How useful is it for public relations students to be skilled in using project management software?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

29. How useful is it for public relations students to be skilled in using time tracking software?

_____ not at all _____ _____ _____ extremely

Please mark the one answer that best describes your situation.

30. Are there any specific computer programs you believe graduating students should be skilled in using?

_____ Yes (please specify) _____
 _____ No

31. Does your sequence or department use e-mail as a regular communication channel?

_____ Yes
 _____ No
 _____ Do Not Know

32. What is your gender?

_____ Female
 _____ Male

33. What is your job title? (mark all that apply)

_____ Instructor	_____ Department Head
_____ Assistant Professor	_____ Sequence Coordinator
_____ Associate Professor	_____ Other (please specify)
_____ Professor	

34. In what year were you born?
19__
35. How many years have you been with your current organization?
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ____ Less than one year | ____ 16 to 20 years |
| ____ 1 to 5 years | ____ 21 to 25 years |
| ____ 6 to 10 years | ____ 26 to 30 years |
| ____ 11 to 15 years | ____ 31 or more years |
36. How many years have you been involved with public relations education?
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ____ Less than one year | ____ 16 to 20 years |
| ____ 1 to 5 years | ____ 21 to 25 years |
| ____ 6 to 10 years | ____ 26 to 30 years |
| ____ 11 to 15 years | ____ 31 or more years |
37. Do you have a computer at your home?
- ____ Yes
- ____ No (if no, please stop here and return the survey)
38. Does your home computer have Internet access?
- ____ Yes
- ____ No
39. How much of your time spent on your home computer is for work-related tasks?
- ____ none ____ half ____ all
40. Please list what you believe are the top three geographic areas in which your graduating public relations majors find public relations jobs.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
41. Anything else about this topic you would like to tell us?

Thank you for your time. We will share our results with you when our data are in and we have processed them.

**Women in the Public Relations Trade Press:
A Content Analysis of *Tide* and *Public Relations Journal*
(1940s through 1960s)**

by

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AEJMC

Baltimore 1998

Running head: *Women in PR Trade Press*

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**Women in the Public Relations Trade Press:
A Content Analysis of *Tide* and *Public Relations Journal*
(1940s through 1960s)**

Abstract

A quantitative and qualitative content analysis of all editorial content by or about women in *Tide* and *Public Relations Journal* from the 1940s through the 1960s reveals women in a variety of roles: public relations professionals, working women, target audiences, and cheesecake. Coverage between the two magazines was markedly different, with *Tide* presenting a more varied depiction of women's lives and work. Trends over time include the increasing marginalization of women within the field.

Introduction

In *An Outline of Careers For Women* (1928), Doris Fleischman portrayed public relations as a wide open field: "No traditions have grown against women's participation in it, and women will share the responsibility of developing and shaping this new profession" (p. 385). She added that a woman's progress "depends solely on those indefinable characteristics known as her ability" (p. 385). But 30 years later Fleischman's optimism had not been realized: women accounted for only 9% of the listings in *Who's Who in Public Relations* (Barbour, 1959).

Since the 1970s, the influx of women into public relations careers has encouraged scholars and practitioners to compile data about numbers of women entering the field, compare salaries by gender, discuss the implications of the feminization of the field, and document the existence of a glass ceiling, which prevents many women from reaching the highest levels of management (Toth & Cline, 1989). In contrast, virtually nothing is known about the earliest female practitioners in public relations: Who were they? What positions did they hold, and where? What problems did they encounter? How were they perceived by their male colleagues? These and similar questions remain unanswered.

To investigate these questions this paper presents a quantitative content analysis and qualitative exploration of coverage of women in *Tide*, a trade magazine for advertising executives that included coverage of the public relations profession beginning in 1946, and *Public Relations Journal*, the official trade magazine of the Public Relations Society of America, first published in 1944. The period of analysis encompasses their beginnings in the 1940s through the 1960s, at which point formal studies of women in the public relations profession exist. The aim of the study is to begin to establish who these women were, how they were characterized, and what contributions they made to the field of public relations.

Literature Overview

Examinations of public relations textbooks indicate that female practitioners have not been sufficiently described. Creedon (1989) found that, in an effort to be inclusive, the authors of 10 textbooks often inserted women's "names at the end of a paragraph from an earlier edition of a book," leaving an "absence of any substantive description of the actual contribution of these women" (p. 27). Kern-Foxworth's (1989) examination found that most textbooks present "a stereotypical point of view by suggesting that women did not make significant contributions to the development of public relations as a professional field" (p. 34).

Most sources on the history of public relations practice contain only negligible references to women. For example, Ewen (1996) dismisses Doris Fleischman with only a sentence or two despite her prominence in the Edward L. Bernays agency; it is her husband, Bernays, who is a principle character in the book. Cutlip (1995) includes several women in his historical review of public relations agencies, including Leone Baxter and Elizabeth Tyler, who were partners in firms in California and Georgia respectively. But much less is known about other women, including one who Cutlip says was hired by Pendleton Dudley to work with female audiences as early as 1920 but whose name has been lost. Moreover, because Cutlip's purpose is to trace the histories of institutions, and not individuals, his book is not definitive even on those women who are included. Although women were major contributors to public relations history, all but an exceptional few have been forgotten.

The literature on women in public relations to date can be viewed in terms of women's historian Gerda Lerner's (1980) four stages of women's history. In the first, compensatory histories tell the stories of "women worthies"; these are the female version of "great men" histories that relate information about people who were exceptional rather than typical of their

time periods. The second phase, contribution history, describes women's contribution to and status in male-dominated society, often pointing out the oppression of women, which has unfortunately sometimes led to a view of women solely as victims. The third phase, transitional history, attempts to redefine traditional, male-dominated history by posing new questions, by making ordinary women central (rather than a subgroup) with a distinct culture of their own. The final stage, synthesis, would offer a new, universal history that compares male and female at different times—a history of the dialectic tensions and interactions between men's and women's cultures.

Lerner's work has had an important influence on the historiography of women in the media. Many scholars have simply tried to establish that women participated in media history, which Henry (1989) describes as "retrieving previously unrecognized women and placing them within the historical record" (p. 342). Historians have responded to these compensatory histories by systematically including them in textbooks and other historical research, a spirit captured in the title of Marzolf's (1977) history of women journalists—*Up From the Footnote*. Following Lerner, however, some scholars assert that simply adding women to a list of other media pioneers is not enough: their contributions must also be examined. For instance, some scholars argue that women editors and reporters put women's news on the front pages (Joliffe & Catlett, 1994), while others assert that to rise to a position of prominence, women had to compromise or accept male-dominated culture (Lumsden, 1995). Women's careers have thus been considered in light of what they contributed to how the media worked.

Feminist media scholars argue that despite these changes the current state of research is inadequate: contribution histories unreasonably and unnecessarily evaluate women "in terms of male achievements" or "standards set by men" (Beasley, 1990, p. 52-53). Thus media historians

have begun to study the interplay between the personal and professional lives of women in the media that value women in their own right. Stinson (1977), for example, analyzed Ida Tarbell's career in the light of "the ambiguities of feminism" (p. 217).

Influenced by Lerner, the only two published biographies of female practitioners portray their careers in the context of their personal lives, particularly as females. Henry (1997) shows that Doris Fleischman possessed abilities that made her at times more effective than even her highly celebrated husband, Edward Bernays. For example, when the NAACP retained the Bernays agency to promote its 1920 annual convention, the first to be held in the South, it was Fleischman who went to Atlanta to work with newspaper editors and the governor because she had an ability to avoid antagonizing people while persuading them to cooperate. Yet Fleischman failed to garner attention or credit even during her own time. Miller (1997) suggests that Jane Stewart, one of Hill and Knowlton's first female executives during the 1960s, approached the job differently than many men because she was female, employing a collaborative rather than authoritative management style that united people and focused them on shared goals. She recognized the importance and value of women in the opinion-formation process, making them a formal part of public relations research.

A newly emerging literature examines women who developed and used public relations techniques in support of social movements such as abolition (McBride, 1993), woman suffrage (Byerly, 1993), and birth control (Garner, 1995). These histories approach women in the manner suggested by Lerner's third phase, transitional history, by valuing what women did—reform work—rather than viewing them in comparison to men, who were paid, full-time public relations practitioners for corporations or other institutions. These authors suggest that women helped to

develop the strategies and tactics that were later institutionalized by male practitioners working at agencies or corporations.

This small but important set of literature demonstrates that women's stories were not the same as men's. Female pioneers deserve the same attention that men such as Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays have received not because of their gender but because Lerner's fourth stage, a synthesized history of public relations, cannot be developed without an understanding of their lives and careers. This research adds to the literature on the history of public relations by assessing how women contributed to and were portrayed in the public relations trade press. The purpose is not to compare women to men (i.e., to decry the fact that men appear much more frequently than women) but to delineate the role of women in the postwar professionalization of public relations, thereby valuing women's contributions in their own right, and to develop insights into other areas for research.

Methodology

The sample analyzed in this paper includes issues of *Tide* and *Public Relations Journal* from the 1940s through the 1960s. *Tide* began publication as *Tide of Advertising and Marketing*; it began carrying public relations news and articles in 1946. Publication was weekly until January 19, 1953, then it became a semimonthly from February 1950 through June 1958, at which time it became a monthly shortly before ceasing publication. *Public Relations Journal*, the official trade magazine of the Public Relations Society of America, began monthly publication in 1944 and continued through 1994, at which time PRSA divided the magazine into two separate publications: *The Strategist* and *Tactics*. The results presented here represent about 78% of all pertinent extant issues from the 1940s through the 1960s because of incomplete library holdings. Work is currently underway to obtain the missing issues via interlibrary loan.

All available issues of the two magazines for the period of study were scanned for items authored by women and/or mentioning women. The items included all articles, editorials, columns, pictorials, and other editorial content, but advertising content was not included. Two independent coders performed a quantitative content analysis using the methodology outlined by Holsti (1969) and Berelson (1952). Categories coded included article length, type, and authorship; gender relevance of subject; focus of women as subject; job title of women; employing organization of women; and inclusion of women in pictures and their centrality to the public relations profession. The complete coding schema is given in Appendix A.

After coding was completed, an inter-coder reliability check using Holsti's (1969) formula was performed, resulting in a 95.4% rate of agreement. The high rate may be attributable to the fact that care was taken in this stage of the research to code only **manifest** content. All disagreements between coders were reconciled, and the data were entered into a file, proofed, and analyzed using SPSS. Additionally, the coders marked items that were **central** to women's issues or presented women in an unusual light for further, more qualitative **analysis**. One coder noted 16 articles in this manner, the other noted those same 16 and 6 more. Following discussion between the two coders of the articles' significance, 21 of the 22 articles were then chosen for further analysis by a single coder.

Quantitative Results

General Characteristics

A total of 173 items by or about women were identified and coded: 113 from *Public Relations Journal* and 60 from *Tide*. Of those issues with items by or about women, over 55% contained only one item by or about women, but another almost 33% had two or three items by or about women. One issue of *Public Relations Journal* contained the most items by or about

women: seven. A larger absolute number of articles by or about women appeared in the 1950s (98) compared to the 1940s (14), for which there were fewer issues overall, and the 1960s (61). All of the issues published in the 1940s contained no more than one article per issue by or about women. In the 1950s, 53.1% of the issues that contained items by or about women contained at least two or more; that figure rises to 69.4% in the 1960s.

Public Relations Journal averaged about 12 total items on all subjects and by all authors per issue, whereas *Tide* averaged about 27, which meant their length was relatively shorter. Looking at just those items by or about women, the item length in *Public Relations Journal* averaged more than one page, whereas the item length in *Tide* averaged approximately one-half page (Table 1). Item type varied between the two magazines, with 54.9% of items in *Public Relations Journal* being authored articles, and another 13.3% being letters to the editor. In *Tide*, no authors were ever mentioned; thus 43.3% of the items were articles with no byline, another 43.3% were news briefs.

Items by and about women were found scattered throughout *Public Relations Journal*, but because *Tide*'s focus was on advertising and public relations was carried as a separate section, most items were found in the third quartile and sometimes the fourth quartile of the magazine where public relations content was centered. An exception was a cover story, which appeared in the second quartile of the magazine. A break down by gender of author reveals that 63% of all articles by women appeared in the back half of the magazine, whereas only 38% of the articles by men did. Those articles written by a male and female professional and/or married couple always appeared in the first half of the magazine. This placement may be attributed to the subject matter covered, as discussed below.

Subject Matter

A close examination of some of the other categories reveals that *Public Relations Journal* and *Tide* varied as well in how they covered women (Table 2). Of the 113 items in *Public Relations Journal*, 89 of them (78.8%) dealt with general subjects rather than with women's issues. The remaining items focused on five different areas: women as a general subject, household issues, fashion, health, and as cheesecake or decoration. In *Tide*, however, 43 of the 60 items (71.7%) dealt with general subjects unrelated to women, whereas the remaining 17 articles dealt specifically with women's issues. Six items (10.0%) featured women as the general subject, seven (11.7%) dealt with household issues, three (5.0%) with fashion, and one with a combination of household and fashion issues. No items in either magazine dealt with family issues.

Not quite two-thirds (61.1%) of the items written by women dealt with general subjects and not specifically women's issues, such as development of educational campaign materials and case studies, often in the non-profit and healthcare fields. Trends over time demonstrate that the smallest percentage of gender relevant items were published in the 1950s, and the most in the 1940s. The 1960s had the largest percentage of articles pertaining to women as a general subject rather than focusing on one issue, such as household or fashion.

Taking a closer look at the women featured as subjects of articles reveals further differences between the two magazines. Of the 113 items in *Public Relations Journal*, 73 (64.6%) specifically mentioned women as subjects. Of these, 16 (14.2%) featured women professions other than public relations only; and 18 (15.9%) featured women as public relations professionals only. Fifteen items (13.3%) featured women as target publics or consumers, while another seven featured women as cheesecake or decoration (6.2%). The remaining items

featured a mix of categories (see Table 2). Overall, in *Public Relations Journal* a total of 26 items, or 23.1%, feature women as public relations professionals, whereas half that number (13; 11.5%) feature women as cheesecake or decoration.

The coverage in *Tide* presents a quite different image, beginning with the fact that 59 of the 60 articles (98.3%) made specific mention of women's roles. No mention of women as cheesecake or decoration is made in any of the items that mention women as subjects. Instead, 79.6% (47 items) refer to women as public relations professionals—37 items as the **only role** mentioned (62.7%; Table 2). Women in just non public relations professional roles accounted for three items, and women featured only as target audiences or consumers accounted for six items.

Trends over time reveal that women as cheesecake was a phenomenon almost entirely of the 1950s. Conversely, in the 1940s women as public relations professionals were the **subject** of 64.3% of the items. That figure drops to 50.0% in the 1950s and to just 26.2% in the 1960s. The percentage of items referring to women as consumers or a target audience remains fairly steady over time: 28.6% in the 1940s, 27.6% in the 1950s, and 21.3% in the 1960s. One of the largest changes noted was that over time women authors less frequently addressed women's issues. Women writing about subjects unrelated specifically to women accounted for only 7.1% of the items in the 1940s, rising to 15.3% in the 1950s, and 41.0% in the 1960s.

Photographs

Pictures were less frequently published in *Tide*, with 58.3% of all items having none, and another 28.3% containing only one (Table 3). Of the items in *Public Relations Journal*, 31.9% contained no pictures, and 20.4% contained six or more. Another 21.2% contained one picture, usually a mug shot of the author, and 46.9% contained two or more.

Of the 77 items in *Public Relations Journal* that included pictures, only 16 (14.2%) contained no women in the pictures. Not quite a third (34 items, 30.1%) contained women in some of the pictures, while another 30 (26.5%) contained women in all of the pictures. A closer examination of those pictures with women featured reveals that only in 17 items (26.6%) were the depicted women always connected to the public relations profession. Another seven articles featured women both as central and as unrelated to the public relations profession (10.9%), and 40 items (62.5%) featured only women who were unrelated to the public relations profession.

As noted previously, pictures were much less frequent in *Tide*, and women were pictured less frequently in the pictures that were included. Of the 25 items with pictures, 10 (16.7%) featured no women at all. Seven items included women in all of the pictures (11.7%), and eight items included women in some of the pictures (13.3%). Of the 15 items featuring pictures with women, nine (60%) featured women as members of the public relations profession, while six (40%) did not.

Trends over time are also notable. In the 1940s, the few times women were pictured they were always portrayed as public relations professionals. In the 1950s, the greatest number of pictures of women were published, with 2 out of 5 portraying women as public relations professionals. In the 1960s, the total number of pictures with women drops, and only 1 out of 5 portrays women as public relations professionals.

Courtesy Titles and Marital Status

Analysis of what courtesy titles were used for women in the items as well as whether their marital status was specified found that in *Public Relations Journal*, 75 items of the 113 total contained specific mention of women. Of those, 52 included no courtesy title and 10 used the title "Miss." Another 10 used the title "Mrs." to refer to a total of 15 women. In *Tide*, 58 items

of the 60 total contained specific mention of women, but only 19 of those items contained courtesy titles. The most frequently used title was "Miss," with 10 mentions in a total of nine items, followed by "Mrs.," with nine mentions in eight items. In neither magazine did the use of courtesy titles appear to be the result of editorial policy, such as using the full name on first mention and using the courtesy title and last name on subsequent mentions. No pattern of use could be determined. It remains open to speculation then whether the use of courtesy titles was guided by author preference, subject preference, or some other factor.

Looking at the Miss and Mrs. labels as well as any other notification of marital status, *Public Relations Journal* made note of the marital status of female subjects in a total of 38 items, or 46.3% of all items featuring specific woman's names. In *Tide*, marital status was noted in 21 items, or 36.2% of all items featuring specific woman's names.

Job Titles and Employers

Job titles of women in the items were noted more frequently in *Tide*. Of the 60 items in that magazine, 34 (54.6%) noted job titles, whereas only 34 of the 113 items (30.1%) in *Public Relations Journal* items did (Table 4). Professional titles in *Tide* ranged from eight mentions of director of public relations/publicity to four mentions of head of public relations/publicity, three mentions each of counsel/counselor and partner, two mentions of president or vice president, and one mention each of information supervisor and community relations director. Other job titles given that were less central to the public relations profession were four mentions of editor, three of secretary, and one of assistant. Four fell into the "other" category: contest manager, official hostess for conventions, fashion and beauty director, and fashion consultant.

In *Public Relations Journal*, of the 34 mentions made, 14 referred only to a general title such as publicist, pr woman, or practitioner. Six mentions were made of director of public

relations/publicity, and two mentions each were made of editor, counselor, and Miss/Queen used as a trade association position. An examination of the combined results of the two magazines, then, reveals that job titles for women, when given, were most often as director of public relations/publicity or as a general title.

Note was also made of whether an item specified the employer of the women mentioned (Table 4). In *Public Relations Journal*, an employer was noted in 64 of the 113 items. Most frequent was corporations, with 13 mentions (20.3%), followed closely by various employers for multiple women with 12 mentions (18.8%). Public relations agencies and trade or professional associations each had eight mentions (12.5% each).

In *Tide*, 53 of the 60 items noted specific employers of women. Almost half—26 mentions (49.1%)—were public relations agencies. Another nine were corporations (17.0%), and seven were with the publishing industry (13.2%). Five mentions were made of trade or professional associations (9.4%). Looking at the overall results, not quite half of the women's employers mentioned were either agencies, corporations (a trend that went down over time), or trade or professional associations. Women were conspicuously scarce in the military, utility, trade union, and financial fields.

Women Authors

Only *Public Relations Journal* provided authors' names; thus the two journals cannot be compared on that point and no information is available on possible female authors of pieces in *Tide*. Of the 113 items in *Public Relations Journal*, 54 of them, or 47.8%, were by a single female author, and two were by female co-authors. An additional five articles, or 4.4%, were by a married couple who also shared a professional relationship, such as Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter or Robert Newcomb and Marg Sammons. In reference to the female authors, eight were

identified as Mrs. and four as Miss; one mention was made of Dr. In 11 of the 54 articles by women their marital status was noted, whereas the marital status of male authors was noted only once in 28 mentions.

In terms of female authors' job titles and employer, 19 mentions were made of directors or assistant directors of public relations/publicity and 18 of writers or editors (26.3% each). Another 10 mentions were made of vice president or president. Female authors in the 1950s were much more likely to be owners, partners, or presidents. In the 1960s they were much more likely to be promotions directors, associates, account executives, and directors of public information. The employers of female authors most frequently noted were agencies, with 23 mentions (26.3%). Far behind at 9 mentions each were corporations and journalists/publishers.

Summary of Quantitative Results

An examination of the data from the quantitative content analysis, then, reveals that the differences in coverage between the two trade magazines are more pronounced than their similarities. Women were depicted in both text and pictures in a wider range of roles in *Tide*, both as public relations professionals and as a target audience. In *Public Relations Journal*, women tended to be presented either as generalized professionals or as window dressing. As professionals, women were associated most often with agencies, corporations, and trade or professional organizations and somewhat less frequently with government. Women seldom or never were associated with the military, utility, trade union, or financial fields. Subjects and roles that were not depicted were women in family roles, possibly indicative of the fact that while fashion and household matters were viewed as part of the public realm, family was still considered a private matter. In fact, the identification of marital status and use of courtesy titles

appeared to be driven more by individual preference of either the author or the subject and not by editorial policy.

Trends over time reveal that women were more often presented as public relations professionals and as associated with corporations in the 1940s and early 1950s than in the later period. These results suggest a carryover effect from World War II, when women stepped in to fill vacancies and their presence was a necessity, with subsequent fading into less prominent roles in the mid to later 1950s and 1960s. Women in the 1940s were depicted simply as professionals, while the 1950s present a strange blend of professional and cheesecake. By the 1960s, women are treated in items more as a general subject for discussion and are less pigeonholed into specific areas such as fashion and household. As authors, women in the 1960s moved away from women's issues and toward more general subjects, indicative of a bit more mainstreaming in this capacity. The following section examines some of these trends more closely through analysis of particular items.

Qualitative Results

A total of 21 items, many of them less than one page, were tapped for further, more qualitative analysis because of their salience to the study. Eight of the articles were published in *Tide*; the remaining thirteen were from *Public Relations Journal*.

One short news brief from *Tide* (May 27, 1949) simply reaffirms the number of women in public relations during this time period. It states that a new west coast public relations association for women held its first meeting and attracted "over 100 women active in the public relations field" (p. 60). From just this one news brief it is clear that many women were active in the field during the 1940s. A 1968 article quotes Labor Department statistics that one-fourth of

all public relations workers were women and PRSA statistics that 10% of the membership was women and 92 women were APR accredited (*Public Relations Journal*, October 1968, p. 26).

Women as Public Relations Professionals

Women as public relations professionals were presented in three different lights in the material examined: as better suited to public relations work because of their "natural abilities," as equal to men in their work, or as competent as men but in their own fashion. Carol Hills, an associate professor at Boston University School of Public Communications, suggested that "Public relations is a 'natural' kind of professional activity for a women" (*Public Relations Journal*, January 1965, p. 28). Rea Smith, assistant to PRSA's executive director, declared:

One reason for this ready acceptance of women is that public relations is a highly intuitive business. The ability to recognize what sort of behavior brings what kind of response is a talent inborn in little girls and developed to a high degree of sensitivity by the time they are through their teens. It's an invaluable asset in public relations. This may be why public relations executives welcome women on their staffs and why so many companies retain female public relations counsel.

(*Public Relations Journal*, October 1968, p. 26)

The same article went on to note that women were naturally more gifted for fashion, food, and home products. It is interesting to note that this idea of a natural ability of women for the field did not emerge in the literature until the 1960s, when it appears women were becoming more overtly marginalized in the profession. And the notion that women were particularly suited to women's "fields" did not emerge until authorship trends had moved away from just such pigeonholing of women.

Other professionals expressed the belief that women were equal in job performance to men. Milton Fairman, vice president of the Borden Company, said:

I think this business has been very receptive to talented women. There are a number of them in the top echelon and there are many, many, more as you get down in the ranks. They certainly are playing a role but they're not playing it because they are women. They are playing it because they are bright people who have something to offer in this business. (*Public Relations Journal*, January 1965, p. 28)

Phyllis Woods, public relations director for the Saracini Construction Company expressed a similar sentiment in the same issue: "We fulfill our function and do our job well. And what we would like would be to be respected, accepted and treated not as men but as equals in the profession" (p. 30).

A Women in Public Relations panel held at the 1956 annual PRSA meeting found that "a bright future in public relations awaits the woman with ability, skill and the desire to do a competent job" (*Public Relations Journal*, January 1957, p. 9). Panelist Catherine Bauer, of the National Society for Crippled Children, gave four steps to success for women in the field: an education in public relations, development of abilities, finding a job that she can best fill, and turning in "a good job—not an imitation of a man's job." Although the whole write-up is less than two column inches, it provides a glimpse that for these women, at least, in the 1950s public relations was a promising career in which women could excel on their own terms.

Another sharp contrast between this 1950s piece and the October 1968 one is that while the career advice in the 1950s was to get good training and step into a good position for which you were qualified, the 1968 article suggests that women prepare by getting secretarial training

and working their way up from a secretarial position (p. 27). Only one published letter to the editor in the following edition took issue with this advice.

Also of note is that by the 1960s, women and men were starting to complain about the marginalized role of women in the field. Two PRSA conference participants decried the lack of women on the program and noted that women were experienced, articulate speakers who could contribute if allowed the chance (*Public Relations Journal*, January 1965, p. 30).

Women as Target Audiences or Consumers

The subject of women as target audiences or consumers received attention following announcement in the late 1940s of a nation-wide survey of 31 major U.S. manufacturing corporations and 66 large banks that found that significantly more women than men were stockholders. In direct response, two items announced that financial institutions were sponsoring financial forums just for women in order to "take the mystery out of financial transactions . . . in language stripped of technical terms" (*Tide*, December 23, 1949, p. 42; see also *Tide*, September 19, 1952). Ironically, one report noted that "there were so many requests for similar sessions for men, the bank is planning to stage a Forum for them too next year" (*Tide*, December 23, 1949, p. 42).

The increase of women into the work force during this time period sparked many articles on women as consumers because of their increasing disposable income. One article highlighted a "public relations campaign to bring the working woman to the fore and alert a community to their great value," during which they had "stores and the Chamber of Commerce pricking up their ears when they learned that not only 500,000 women worked in Philadelphia, but had a spendable income of \$946 million" (*Tide*, January 2, 1954, p. 38).

Women's increasing power as opinion leaders was also targeted. One article detailed the efforts of Armour & Co. to counter publicity about high meat prices and antagonism to rancher's demands for more public lands to be opened to grazing, through special tours of opinion leaders. Two were held the previous year, and this, the third, featured "15 women leaders, culled from the press and other high opinion-molding jobs" (*Tide*, June 24, 1949, p. 58). Although information is presented that men from previous years included those with major governmental groups and trade associations, no mention of the women's affiliations other than the press was noted.

A slightly more than five-page article written by Mabel Flanley and Sally Woodward of Flanley & Woodward, New York, on "This Business of Women" appeared in the October 1955 issue of *Public Relations Journal*. The article states women should be targeted by public relations campaigns because of their sheer numbers, their increasing participation in social and political activities, the wider range of women's interests evidenced in the decade following World War II, and women's increasing influence in financial circles.

In the section on how to establish a women's program, Flanley and Woodward note that hiring a woman to lead it is necessary, but it is not enough in and of itself. They add four qualifications for such a woman: that she be well trained in a broad range of public relations activities, that she be well acquainted not just with women's issues but with women opinion leaders, that she be familiar with business and how to work with management, and that she have respect for the organization by which she is employed. They stress that just having writing skills and employing one-way communication is not enough: these women must be involved in management decision making and employ two-way communications with publics--advice eerily prescient of contemporary public relations management theory.

Women as Spouses

One theme that emerged was the importance of women as spouses—they were viewed as opinion leaders within their households. The publisher of Parade magazine targeted female employees not because of their needs or contributions but because he “believes . . . firmly in the power of women to spread understanding about business and the U.S. economic system generally—once they understand how they, their husbands and families fit into it.” With such knowledge, “they can, and in most cases will, be a powerful factor in their husband’s success . . . [and] anything that helps a man achieve a better balance between home and work contributes to his efficacy and consequently to the enterprise that employs him” (*Tide*, November 25, 1949, p. 56). A similar sentiment was noted in an article on employee relations that stated “The kaffee klatsch can kill you. Wives in a plant community exert an extremely powerful influence and when working on a false premise, they can be deadly” (*Public Relations Journal*, June 1956, p. 14).

One article, published in the 1960s, addressed the proper role for the wife of a public relations executive. The author, assistant vice president and director of public relations for Bristol-Myers Company, noted that “wives are an extremely valuable asset in furthering their husbands [sic] public relations career” (*Public Relations Journal*, March 1962, p. 12). He warns, however, that it must be the right kind of wife.

Occasionally, of course, we do come across the tactless woman, a severe introvert, or one who delights in “speaking only the truth,” usually at the cost of other people’s feelings. Any of these types should stay entirely out of her husband’s professional life. If she must be present, she ought to put an invisible seal on her mouth in the presence of the press, a client or a company executive.” (p. 12)

According to the author, the natural advantages of a wife include being able to ask about others' family lives and pick out suitable gifts. Their natural talents also include instinctively knowing how people will get along and what people will want to drink. Whereas the articles from the 1940s and 1950s on women as spouses, then, addressed the need to court them as an influential public, by the 1960s women as spouses have become corporate assets or liabilities, to be treated accordingly.

Women as Cheesecake or Decoration

As noted earlier, women as cheesecake was a 1950s phenomenon. Although *Public Relations Journal* contained the only references to women as cheesecake, it should be noted that two of the articles were railing against the use of women as such. Both dealt with images in advertising, noting that "cheesecake often distracts audience attention" (August 1956, p. 7) and that "cheesecake for the sake of cheesecake is a trend hard to check, but ads that do best are newsy catalogues" (October 1956, p. 18).

Given these two warnings, it is even more striking that other issues of *Public Relations Journal* contained cheesecake for cheesecake's sake. A pictorial quiz on vice presidential candidates featured men as political figures and women, even when voting, as fashion models: "hats were racy" and "ankle-length skirts and F.D.R. arrived on the U.S. scene" (August 1956, p. 20). A second article stated that while the editors of the magazine were immune to cheesecake they knew newspaper editors were not, so they were presenting a pictorial selection of "Queens." The nine-picture spread features five women in bathing suits, one in evening dress, Miss Majorette in her uniform, Miss Drum Stick in "farmers clothes," and Miss Rheingold in a day dress. The editors label it "trivia," but they devote a page to it just the same.

The annual PRSA convention write-ups in the 1950s often contained reference to the "attractive ladies present" and the "exhibits—through which escort was provided by **some** young ladies who should certainly be given Associate memberships" (*Public Relations Journal*, January 1958, p. 6). Although experience tells us booth babes remain a part of conventions, they are notable by their absence in later convention write-ups. A 1969 piece on the **successful** packaging of the "Maid of Cotton" comes the closest to cheesecake in the 1960s, although **the author** insists that "cheesecake photographs are diplomatically avoided, and a dignified, lady-like **image** is maintained" (*Public Relations Journal*, May 1969, p. 27). Be that as it may, the judging procedures outlined include an examination of the prospective maid's measurements and an appearance "in a swimsuit before the judges in a private session" (p. 27).

Bernays' Feminist Manifesto

The final article features a 1945 study sponsored by *McCall's* and **performed by** Edward L. Bernays on "the basic problems of women . . . to find out why women (especially U.S. women) do not always accomplish either their own personal aims or realize their own happiness" (*Tide*, June 21, 1946, p. 52). Based on surveys of educational, sociological, medical, and psychoanalytical leaders and public opinion poll data, Bernays outlines a plan of action for women to solve "some of the inequities [they] face in the U.S.," particularly in **terms of** educational, political, and professional opportunities. Bernays concluded from his research that "There is domination by men and subjection of women. There is discrimination and intolerance from which women suffer unceasingly. . . . Their social status derives almost entirely from the status of their husbands." But Bernays does not just point out the problems, he **also** supplies a grass roots blueprint for action, including how to reach and influence community opinion leaders, how to work through existing women's organizations or set up new ones, and how to get

publicity. At the basis of this feminist manifesto is the message that only women can help themselves, they cannot and should not expect help from others.

The overall tone of the piece, then, is that of self-help manual and not that of unfair discrimination. But the burden for improvement is placed squarely on women's shoulders. Even though Bernays is operating within the cultural milieu of the 1940s, the great gap between his expressed sensitivity to the issue and his unwillingness to actually act on it is marked. The dichotomy between Bernays' thought and action is similar to that outlined by Henry (1997) in her biography of Bernays' wife, Doris Fleischman. This article remains one of the most puzzling pieces found that addressed women and their issues.

Conclusion

What is most striking about the coverage is the way it differs between the two magazines. *Public Relations Journal* presented women either in more generalized professional roles or as window dressing or cheesecake. *Tide*, however, presented a much more well-rounded depiction of women's roles, from fulfilling a variety of public relations functions to occupying a variety of niches as target audiences and consumers. No mention of cheesecake, booth babes, or female were present in *Tide*. What remains unanswered is why the depictions varied so much between the two magazines. No obvious answer emerged from this study.

Trends over time include the progression from the 1940s, in which women were an unremarkable part of the profession, to the 1950s, in which the dichotomy between women as professionals and women as cheesecake is marked. Finally, in the 1960s, women appear more marginalized within the profession; they are no longer cheesecake, but they are no longer top professionals as well except in a few, remarkable cases. Women in the 1960s metamorphose into

supportive spouses, professionals that may be seen but not heard at annual conventions, or entry-level secretaries hoping to obtain a professional position.

Certainly the amount of coverage in *Public Relations Journal* devoted to women as cheesecake or as window dressing and the trend in the 1960s toward increasing marginalization of women within the profession could lend itself to an analysis of women as victims of discrimination. The booth babes, Miss Swimsuit, and Maid of Cotton stand out as female stereotypes not at all uncommon to the era. Concentrating on just these aspects, however, would be misleading for public relations history. Following Lerner (1980), it is more instructive to note the instances in which women were portrayed as leading both professional and personal lives, providing campaign and industry leadership and forming a major target audience for American corporations and financial institutions. From these items a more complete picture and history of the role of women in the developing field of public relations in the post World War II era emerges.

In particular, the Flanley and Woodward article in *Public Relations Journal* is notable for its far reaching insight into the development of the public relations field and its foreshadowing of modern public relations theory. These two women, remembered mainly as a footnote in the current textbooks, laid out the foundation for such key notions prominent in the literature today as the need to be part of the dominant coalition and the efficacy of two-way communication. Overall, over 50 specific women's names, women who have been lost to texts and published history to date, emerged from this study. Having identified these women and their contributions, it is now possible to do further research into their lives, not just placing them in the footnotes or moving them up into the text, but continuing the process of producing transitional history--making ordinary women central characters with a distinct culture of their own.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Item Characteristics in *Tide* and *Public Relations Journal* (1940s through 1950s)

<u>Category</u>	<u><i>PR Journal</i></u>		<u><i>Tide</i></u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>
Item Length						
< one-quarter page	23	20.4	29	48.3	52	30.1
< one-half page	6	5.3	9	15.0	15	8.7
< one page	3	2.7	12	20.0	15	8.7
= one page	11	9.7	4	6.7	15	8.7
> one page	70	61.9	6	10.0	76	43.9
Magazine Quartile						
first	31	27.4	0	0.0	31	17.9
second	22	19.5	1	1.7	22	13.3
third	16	14.2	47	78.3	63	36.4
fourth	44	38.9	12	20.0	56	32.4
Article Type						
bylined article	62	54.9	0	0.0	62	35.8
editorial	3	2.7	0	0.0	3	1.7
news brief	7	6.2	26	43.3	33	19.1
pictorial/picture & outline	6	5.3	5	8.3	11	6.4
event summary	6	5.3	3	5.0	9	5.2
column	2	1.8	0	0.0	2	1.2
letter to editor	15	13.3	0	0.0	15	8.7
article, no byline	6	5.3	26	43.3	32	18.5
other	6	5.3	0	0.0	6	3.5
Total Items	113		60		173	

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Coverage of Women as Subjects in *Public Relations Journal* and *Tide* Items (1940s and 1950s)

Category	<i>PR Journal</i>		<i>Tide</i>		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Gender Relevance of Subject						
not applicable	89	78.8	43	71.7	132	76.3
women as general subject	13	11.5	6	10.0	19	11.0
household issues	4	3.5	7	11.7	11	6.4
fashion	4	3.5	3	5.0	7	4.0
cheesecake or decoration	2	1.8	0	0.0	2	1.2
household and fashion	0	0.0	1	1.7	1	0.6
women's health	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
Total Items	113		60		173	
Women's Roles as Subjects						
(1) non pr professions	16	14.2	3	5.1	19	11.0
(2) target audience/consumers	15	13.3	6	10.2	21	12.1
(3) pr professionals	18	15.9	37	62.7	55	31.8
(4) cheesecake or decoration	7	6.2	0	0.0	7	4.0
(5) both 1 and 2	4	3.5	2	3.5	6	3.5
(6) both 1 and 3	3	2.7	3	5.1	6	3.5
(7) both 2 and 3	2	1.8	6	10.2	8	4.6
(8) both 2 and 4	4	3.5	0	0.0	4	2.3
(9) both 3 and 4	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
(10) 1, 2, and 3	2	1.8	2	3.5	4	2.3
(11) 1, 2, and 4	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
(12) not applicable	40	35.4	1	1.7	41	23.7
Totals	113		60		173	

Table 3. Gender and Professional Relevance of Pictures in *Public Relations Journal* and *Tide* (1940s and 1950s)

<u>Category</u>	<i>PR Journal</i>		<i>Tide</i>		Total	
	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>%</u>
Pictures						
none	36	31.9	35	58.3	71	41.0
one	24	21.2	17	28.3	41	23.7
two	11	9.7	2	3.3	13	7.5
three	5	4.4	3	5.0	8	4.6
four	10	8.8	0	0.0	10	5.8
five	4	3.5	2	3.3	6	3.5
six or more	23	20.4	1	1.7	24	13.9
Women in Pictures						
none of the pictures	16	14.2	10	16.7	26	15.0
some of the pictures	34	30.1	8	13.3	42	24.3
all of the pictures	30	26.5	7	11.7	37	21.4
not applicable	33	29.2	35	58.3	68	39.3
Total Items	113		60		173	
Centrality of Women in Pictures to PR Profession*						
central to profession	17	26.6	9	60.0	26	32.9
not central to profession	40	62.5	6	40.0	46	58.2
sometimes central to profession	7	10.9	0	0.0	7	8.9
Totals	64		15		79	

* the 94 instances in which there were no pictures or no women in the pictures are not included here

Table 4. Job Titles and Employers of Women in Items in *Public Relations Journal* and *Tide* (1940s and 1950s)

Category	<i>PR Journal</i>		<i>Tide</i>		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Job Title						
general (publicist, pr woman, etc.)	14	12.4	0	0.0	14	8.1
director of pr/publicity	6	5.3	8	23.5	14	8.1
head of pr/publicity	1	0.9	4	11.8	5	2.9
counsel/counselor	2	1.8	3	8.8	5	2.9
editor	2	1.8	4	11.8	6	3.5
secretary	1	0.9	3	8.8	4	2.3
other	1	0.9	4	11.8	5	2.9
partner	0	0.0	3	8.8	3	1.7
vice president/president	1	0.9	2	5.9	3	1.7
assistant	0	0.0	1	2.9	1	0.6
information supervisor	0	0.0	1	2.9	1	0.6
community relations director	0	0.0	1	2.9	1	0.6
Miss/Queen	2	1.8	0	0.0	2	1.2
promotions director	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
media consultant	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
campaign manager	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
various	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
none given or not applicable	79	69.9	26	43.3	105	60.7
Totals	113		60		173	
Employer						
agency	8	11.5	26	49.1	34	19.7
corporation	13	7.1	9	17.0	22	12.7
trade/professional association	8	7.1	5	9.4	13	7.5
various/general	12	10.6	1	1.9	13	7.5
publishing	2	1.8	7	13.2	9	5.2
non profit	7	6.2	1	1.9	8	4.6
government	5	4.4	1	1.9	6	3.5
financial	0	0.0	2	3.8	2	1.2
entertainment	3	2.7	1	1.9	4	2.3
education	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
healthcare	4	3.5	0	0.0	4	2.3
utility	1	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.6
none noted	49	43.4	7	13.2	56	32.4
Totals	113		60		173	

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Appendix A Coding Schema**Women in the Public Relations Trade Press**

- 1-3 ID number
- 4 Journal
- 1 PR Journal
 - 2 Tide
- 5-6 Month
- 01-12
- 7-8 Day
- 01-31
- 9-10 Year
- 19__
- 11-12 Total number of items in Table of Contents
- 01-XX
- 13 Total number of items concerning women
- 01-XX
- 14 Item Type
- 1 authored article
 - 2 editorial
 - 3 news brief
 - 4 pictorial/picture and outline
 - 5 event summary
 - 6 column
 - 7 letter to editor
 - 8 article—no author
 - 9 other (specify)

15 Pictures

- 1 none
- 2 one
- 3 two
- 4 three
- 5 four
- 6 five
- 7 six or more

16 Women in Pictures

- 1 none
- 2 some
- 3 all
- 4 not applicable

17 Centrality of women in pictures to public relations profession

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 sometimes
- 4 not applicable

18 Article start

- 1 1st quartile
- 2 2nd quartile
- 3 3rd quartile
- 4 4th quartile

19 Article Length

- 1 <1/4 page
- 2 <1/2 page
- 3 <1 page
- 4 1 page
- 5 >1 page

20 Authorship

- 1 none given
- 2 single female
- 3 more than 1 female
- 4 female and male professional relationship

- 5 female and male spousal relationship
- 6 single male
- 7 more than one male
- 8 can't tell
- 9 4 and 5

21 Gender Relevance of Subject

- 1 not applicable
- 2 general subject
women's issues
- 3 family
- 4 household
- 5 fashion
- 6 cheesecake
- 7 household and fashion
- 8 healthcare

22-23 Women as Subject

- 1 women in non-pr work or non-professional role
- 2 women as subjects consumers/targets
- 3 women as professionals-pr
- 4 both 2 and 3
- 5 women as pr educators
- 6 cheesecake/booth babes
- 7 1 and 3
- 8 1, 2, and 3
- 9 3 and 9
- 10 2 and 9
- 11 1 and 2
- 12 1, 2, and 9
- 13 not applicable

24 Women's titles in Article (first mention)

- 1 no women mentioned
- 2 Professor
- 3 Dr./PhD.
- 4 Miss
- 5 Mrs.
- 6 Ms.
- 7 APR
- 8 Royalty
- 9 women mentioned-no title 433

25 Women's titles in Article (second mention)

- 0 none
- 1 no women mentioned
- 2 Professor
- 3 Dr./PhD.
- 4 Miss
- 5 Mrs.
- 6 Ms.
- 7 APR
- 8 Royalty
- 9 women mentioned-no title

24 Women's titles as Authors (first mention)

- 1 no women mentioned
- 2 Professor
- 3 Dr./PhD.
- 4 Miss
- 5 Mrs.
- 6 Ms.
- 7 APR
- 8 Royalty
- 9 women mentioned-no title

27 Women's titles as authors (second mention)

- 0 none
- 1 no women mentioned
- 2 Professor
- 3 Dr./PhD.
- 4 Miss
- 5 Mrs.
- 6 Ms.
- 7 APR
- 8 Royalty
- 9 women mentioned-no title

28 Spousal Affiliation noted in article

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 not applicable

29 Spousal Affiliation noted of author

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 not applicable

30-31 Client/Employer noted in article

- 01 Corporate
- 02 Entertainment
- 03 Agency
- 04 political/Government
- 05 Military
- 06 Trade professional Association
- 07 Utility
- 08 Union
- 09 Nonprofit
- 10 general/various
- 11 Healthcare
- 12 Financial
- 13 Publishing
- 14 Education
- 15 None
- 16 Other (specify)

32-33 Client/Employer noted of author

- 01 Corporate
- 02 Entertainment
- 03 Agency
- 04 political/Government
- 05 Military
- 06 Trade Association
- 07 Utility
- 08 Union
- 09 Nonprofit
- 10 Freelance
- 11 Journalist/Publisher
- 12 Healthcare
- 13 Education
- 14 Healthcare
- 15 Financial
- 16 None
- 17 Other (specify)

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34-35 Job Title noted in article

- 01 general (publicist, pr man or woman, press agent)
- 02 head of or manager of public relations or publicity
- 03 director of public relations/publicity
- 04 spokesman/woman/person
- 05 press secretary/officer
- 06 promotions directors
- 07 vice president/executive vice president
- 08 associate
- 09 owner/head
- 10 communications director
- 11 information/press supervisor
- 12 counsel or counselor
- 13 director of information
- 14 consultant
- 15 account executive
- 16 speechwriter
- 17 partner
- 18 campaign manager
- 19 employee liaison/relations
- 20 lobbyist
- 21 president
- 22 assistant
- 23 editor
- 24 secretary
- 25 Miss/Queen
- 26 director of community relations
- 27 none given
- 28 other (specify)
- 29 not applicable

36-37 Job Title noted of author

- 01 general (publicist, pr man or woman, press agent)
- 02 head of or manager of public relations or publicity
- 03 (asst.) director of public relations/publicity
- 04 spokesman/woman/person
- 05 press secretary/officer
- 06 promotions directors
- 07 (vice) president/executive (vice) president
- 08 associate
- 09 owner
- 10 communications director

- 11 information/press supervisor
- 12 counsel or counselor
- 13 director of information
- 14 media consultant
- 15 account executive
- 16 speechwriter
- 17 partner
- 18 campaign manager
- 19 employee liaison
- 20 lobbyist
- 21 writer/editor/publisher
- 22 president
- 23 public relations consultant
- 24 chairman
- 25 Dr./Professor/Dean
- 26 director of public information
- 27 publications head
- 28 manager of educational relations
- 29 executive director
- 30 none given
- 31 other (specify)

**Teaching Public Relations Campaigns:
The Current State of the Art**

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**Teaching Public Relations Campaigns:
The Current State of the Art**

Abstract

A national survey of campaigns professors was conducted to provide public relations faculty with helpful pedagogical information about the public relations campaigns course and to provide the current Commission on Public Relations Education with an empirical basis for setting curricular guidelines. Results indicated that while the great majority of campaigns classes incorporate research elements, many are not grounded in theory, a crucial criterion for "excellent" public relations. Responses also indicated a glaring absence of "real-world" strategies and tactics in the course and inconsistencies regarding the agency-style setup. Based on survey data and a careful reading of syllabi from respondents, the authors offer recommendations for PR campaigns course content, as well as examples of innovative teaching strategies currently implemented around the country.

Teaching Public Relations Campaigns: The Current State of the Art

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Given the array of pedagogical orientations and specific approaches in designing and structuring the campaigns course, we set out to assay how professors teach the course. We wanted to provide the Commission on Public Relations Education with empirical data to inform curricular guidelines. And we wanted to draw from syllabi insights and innovations. To do this, our overriding question was: What is the current state of the art in public relations campaigns instruction?

We sought to analyze the extent to which students receive practical, real-world experience. We suspected that most campaigns courses essentially ignored theoretical elements which are deemed keys for excellent public relations, but less significant in practitioner eyes. Just as we were concerned about the presence of theory, we hoped to find a real-world orientation in this capstone course. We also were eager to find out the overall emphasis on research and management skills. Finally, we wanted to analyze the array of pedagogical strategies employed by campaigns teachers.

We admit to taking a stand on some issues that others will readily call into question. Declaring our stand was done to enliven discussion. We hope our data is sound and rises above our own views to serve as an empirical foundation about how to teach campaigns.

Campaigns: A Course for All Reasons

As the "capstone" course in public relations education, the PR campaigns course bears a significant responsibility to both the student and the profession. From a survey of 598 public relations professionals, Cameron, Sallot and Weaver Lariscy (1996) determined that educators have a responsibility to *all students*; practitioners "should look forward to the continued influx of (students) actually trained in public relations who may carry a clearer sense of how to perform as professionals." Currently, according to Cameron et al., only a minority of practitioners are formally schooled in the discipline.

Perhaps the single-most important function of capstone courses in journalism and mass communication is to prepare students for the real world. These "fledgling commodities," if you will, become increasingly more marketable as higher education adapts to the needs of various constituents. As public relations education has shifted from being a variant of a liberal arts degree to training for a profession, the campaigns course must supplement the skills training for the technician role with managerial values and skills. Instead of focusing our energies on *defining* the discipline, we should concern ourselves with *refining* it. Future practitioners need to possess real-world communicative and planning skills, while basing their strategies on substantive case studies, sound research, and theoretical underpinnings.

L. Grunig, J. Grunig and Ehling (1992) wrote that public relations fits into what organizational sociologists call a *boundary-spanning role*. Since practitioners manage relationships with external groups, public relations contributes to overall organizational

effectiveness. It stands to reason that campaigns students need to experience real-world, organizational situations in order to be prepared to manage publics and be a member of an organization's dominant coalition, rather than toil as a subservient technician.

The campaigns course can never be sufficient to fully prepare students for real-world experiences. For example, Strohmaier, Stratton, Novak and Leipzig (1992) argued that many students lack "communication competence," a shortfall which could be remedied by an introductory course in speech communication. The authors posit that this course could serve as a foundation for acquisition of advanced communicative skills in discipline-specific situations (i.e. campaigns class) later in the student's collegiate career.

Indications from this particular study show that educators are on the right track, but may need some guidance. A promising possibility is the newest Commission on Public Relations Education (with representatives from AEJMC, PRSA and ICA, among others). We hope that these findings provide a valuable resource for commission members, professors of public relations campaigns, and scholars in the field.

Teaching Campaigns: Practical and Theoretical Perspectives

Many researchers lament the current state of public relations as being steeped in technicianship and low in managerial "excellence." As the acknowledged "capstone" class in most public relations programs, campaigns courses, according to Kendall (1998), should be designed to hone both practical (research, planning and oral/interpersonal) skills and incorporate theoretical significance.

How do we prepare well-rounded public relations practitioners? Grunig (1989) noted that truly excellent public relations departments employ communication *managers*

who supervise the work of technicians. He contended that we should develop sequences, programs or departments of public relations which "produce graduates that will serve organizations -- and society -- well in the future."

Leichty and Springston (1996) warned that "a lot of meaningful information is lost by categorizing practitioners as either managers or technicians." Although too much may be made of the distinction in practice, the campaigns course is usually the last (and oftentimes only) opportunity for students to integrate production skills with strategic management abilities.

An ongoing battle between academia and "old-school" practitioners continues over the relevance of public relations theory. Grunig (1998) contends that theory "has gotten a black eye among many practitioners because the theories taught in public relations frequently have had little application in public relations." According to Grunig, the two most important principles in teaching theory -- which he claims is "the most important thing we teach public relations in a university" -- are: (1) showing students how all of the theories related to public relations fit into a cohesive whole and (2) showing students applications of these theories in real-life practice of public relations.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985) espoused a systematic integration of practical and theoretical strategies in the public relations curriculum. In their five criteria for success in the profession, the authors' first criterion is acquisition of specialized educational preparation in the attainment of knowledge and skills based on theory developed through research, with an emphasis on knowledge over skill.

VanSlyke Turk (1989) determined that public relations education successfully

imparts communications (technical) skills at the expense of other skills and perspectives essential to effective management. These include financial and budgeting skills, planning and organizing, problem solving, decision making and analytical skills, much of which are grounded in public relations theory. Turk noted that "individual and institutional circumstances...must dictate how those skills and perspectives are taught -- in a separate public relations management course, (or) as part of a case studies or campaigns class."

Falb (1992) professed that public relations "is fast moving in the direction of being a part of the management process, therefore, it must be based on a knowledge of business and management processes." Kinnick and Cameron (1994), in a nationwide study of public relations management classes, reported that most academic programs "pay lip service" in equipping future practitioners with managerial skills. Case studies and campaign development were at the heart of course assignments in schools which already offered separate courses in cases and campaigns.

In a survey of 126 public relations coordinators or program directors, DeSanto (1994) reported that more than one half (51 percent) of educators teaching an advanced public relations course or public relations cases spend more than eight class hours specifically on public relations research. She stated that those academic programs which do not require an advanced research course are at "high risk of not being grounded in sound public relations theory." However, she added that there is "an inherent danger in training public relations practitioners who fail to understand practical application to the profession, but instead are schooled to be graduate student-type researchers looking only

for statistical significance."

According to VanSlyke Turk (1998), the implementation of "for real" target audiences is one of three types of "legitimate" research, along with scholarly research (scientific methods) and applied research (case studies). While campaigns classes offer an opportunity for real-world experience, they may be falling short in their goals. McCall (1992) notes that "educators may have been pandering over the years to a professional audience that is impossible to please...most educators have little sense of what best prepares students for the industry."

The Research Element

Public relations formulas such as R-A-C-E (Marston, 1962), R-A-I-S-E (Kendall, 1998) and R-O-P-E (Hendrix, 1995) have become widely used reference points for students. The "R" in all three acronyms -- *research* -- is the focal point in identifying publics, forming strategy, and setting objectives -- as well as in accurate evaluation of objectives later. Data and theory are relatively useless unless grounded by solid primary and secondary research. In a campaigns course, a situation analysis (of the organization itself) and a keen understanding of relevant publics is critical to the process, as is a valid, reliable research component.

DeSanto (1994) found that in advanced public relations/case studies courses, nearly one-half of all educators surveyed believed that their *main objective* was to impart research techniques to their students. Professors indeed have a number of proven quantitative and qualitative techniques at their disposal.

Lederman (1990) assessed focus group effectiveness, and noted that a major

advantage is that "researchers can gather more data in a relatively shorter time (than other techniques)." In a 10-week quarter or 15-week semester, time constraints are highly evident. As a cautionary note, Lederman added that focus groups have a specific and limited function, and should not serve as a substitute for quantitative data collection, because it does not provide a sample from which to generalize and draw inferences.

McElreath (1998) stated that campaigns professors should implement the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), a highly structured form of problem solving/brainstorming that encourages "silent writing" by each team member which keeps dominant individuals from taking control of the group. Computerized research software allows students to formulate questions -- oftentimes with the NGT -- as well as tabulate results and form databases for survey dissemination.

Conducting surveys as part of a campaigns course is a major undertaking. Telephone interviews also provide a "personal touch," but are wrought with potential problems, according to Stone (1996). He noted that additional funding is rarely available for "non-involved" (impartial) interviewers, and rarely is a public relations director (or in a university setting, the campaigns teacher) "capable of organizing the elaborate procedures for screening, training and supervision of interviews...if the budget cannot support hiring neutral interviewers, the study's validity may be doomed from the start."

Cameron and Curtin (1992) reported that the Publics research software is based largely on Grunig's situational theory, which posits that limited resources for a communication campaign can be most efficiently used if communication efforts are targeted at sub-groups of the overall audience. Elasmr and Carter (1996) stated that by

making computer-based communication a pleasant and accessible medium, user satisfaction and system effectiveness would increase as a result. These efficiencies in time and expense facilitate research as a major component in courses.

The "Pedagogical Gatekeeper"

The campaigns professor, who usually works within some broad departmental or sequence parameters, sets the tone for the class by choosing a particular direction of study. Professorial preferences and time constraints dictate course content to some degree, but the professor makes a conscious decision on the final mix of technicianship, management skills, theory development and research implementation in the course.

Rings (1983) echoed the traditional practitioner sentiment when he stated that "the meat of the campaign (course) is message and media strategy and tactics...students who have completed the course are notably more self-confident and better prepared to handle more specialized campaigns." Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) noted that pedagogical skills need to facilitate the development of relevant skills, and create techniques for translating scholarly knowledge into a usable form for those in everyday life.

The campaigns course has evolved over the past decade into an even more challenging experience for both student and instructor. Russell (1998) reports that many educators seek a "capstone" experience for their graduating students, which provides a "wonderful opportunity" to have students work in small groups and experience team building, supervision, delegation, motivation and peer evaluation.

These attributes are traditionally emphasized in campaigns courses, but are

professors adequately carrying out the charge? McElreath (1998) cites a dysfunctional "Atlas Complex" among many educators in which they, incorrectly, take the bulk of responsibility for generating and sharing knowledge to their students. This primarily one-way asymmetrical communication between "an all-knowing teacher surrounded by eager-to-learn students" is counterproductive, according to McElreath. Russell (1998) posited that professors create special assignments so that students actually deliver some of the lectures. Since campaigns usually requires an oral presentation element and continuous verbal contact with clients, an emphasis on dialoging rather than the didactic approach could indeed be very appropriate.

Agency Setup or Case Study?

Although a primary goal of most campaigns professors is to prepare students through real-world experiences, scholars differ on how the campaigns class should be structured. Kendall (1998) preferred the "agency format," with the class divided into noncompeting teams with real-world clients.

Russell (1998) noted that every community has not-for-profit agencies who are always looking for good communications programs. Sallot (1996) performed a case study at The University of Georgia (UGA) in which university and college development offices were designated as campaigns class clients. Currently, two competing student campaign teams at UGA are formulating plans to expand the department's Public Relations Laboratory.

McElreath (1998) opined that "most of the major weaknesses of mini-agencies and student consulting groups are the result of having to work with clients." He states

that expectations (of clients) vary dramatically, and that there are few sanctions or rewards from the client to motivate professional-level work, with clients "hesitating to take young, inexperienced students seriously." Others seek paying clients whose vested financial interest raises their performance as an engaged and caring client. Dozier and Broom (1998) cited blood banks, city governments and transit authorities as paying clients for their advanced public relations research classes.

Research Questions

We developed the following research questions to elaborate our global question:

What is the current state of the art?

RQ1: What are the most predominant pedagogical strategies and course management techniques used by campaigns educators? Are these course arrangements intended to provide a "coming out" to the world of work in public relations?

RQ2: To what extent is theory and research emphasized in the campaigns course?

RQ3: What role does management skill and/or interpersonal dynamics play in the student campaign both internally (within team structure) and externally (relationship with/presentation to the client), and how do these factors fit into the grading process?

RQ4: What sort of insights and innovations can be garnered from the syllabi used by survey respondents in teaching their campaigns course?

Method

We formulated a 38-question survey, which was pretested through administration to four prominent scholars currently serving on the newest Commission on Public Relations Education. Numerous additional questions, refinement of initial questions and a more sophisticated demographic battery of items resulted from the pretest.

Survey respondents were selected through a combination of two methods: 1) Using the Association of Educators of Journalism & Mass Communication 1997-98 Directory of Colleges and Universities, the authors e-mailed or faxed the survey to every institution listed in the directory which included public relations as a major, sequence, or course of study. We also asked respondents to send their course syllabus. 2) We obtained additional responses by cross-checking with the 1997 "Where Shall I Go to Study Advertising and Public Relations" Handbook, which listed several institutions missing from the Journalism & Mass Communication Directory.

In an exhaustive attempt to reach all potential respondents, each contact person was notified twice by e-mail, or if no e-mail address was available, once by fax. Follow-up calls were made to all non-respondents several weeks after the initial surveys were sent. We determined that 280 schools offered public relations majors, sequences or courses of study, with a return of 99 surveys, for an overall response rate of 35 percent. A total of 44 surveys were completed online, while 42 were faxed and only two were mailed in. An additional 11 surveys were acquired through follow-up phone calls.

In addition, 24 syllabi were sent. Selected teaching techniques and related course content from the syllabi are included in the upcoming "Insights and Innovations" section.

Findings and Discussion

A general description of the sample denotes the following: the average enrollment of responding schools was about 16,000, with a high of 50,000 and a low of 850; 83 percent of responding schools offer a standalone public relations campaigns course. (We did not

request response from IMC or other hybrid campaigns courses.) About 59 percent of campaigns classes are available to undergraduates only, with 40 percent being cross-listed (undergraduates and graduates). About one-half of juniors and 40 percent of graduate students are permitted to take campaigns, and nearly all seniors (97 percent) are eligible. Prerequisite classes are required by every school surveyed, and campaigns is required by most programs (88 percent). About two sections of campaigns per school year (nearly 90 percent of schools are on semester system) are being taught. The average school had about two full-time faculty members in public relations. Nearly two of every three schools surveyed have a PR major. Less than half of schools surveyed were accredited by ACEJMC, and only a quarter were certified by PRSA. *Most significantly, 87 percent of the respondents stated that campaigns was the "capstone" course for the major/sequence.*

The results show that campaigns teachers are making a concerted effort to implement research and strategic planning into the course. However, research techniques generally lack a quantitative focus, and public relations theory is conspicuous by its absence.

Pedagogical Techniques/Course Management

Oftentimes, demographics of a class structure play a pivotal role in setting the tone. The average campaigns class size, according to the survey, is about 20, which allows the teacher the flexibility to form small work groups, and still have an overall "manageable" number to supervise as a whole, or to assemble in lectures.

Two-thirds (67 percent) of the respondents used a team-based campaigns approach, while 19 percent focused on individual campaigns. About 14 percent of respondents utilized a combination of both team and individual campaigns. Significantly, only 18 percent of

teams were randomly assigned by the professor, with 45 percent of teams chosen on the basis of individual characteristics, and 37 percent of teams formed by students themselves.

The majority of respondents described their teaching styles as "lecturer," "adviser" and "coach," but not significantly as "coordinator," which implies a pedagogical strategy that emphasizes student/team autonomy rather than a didactic approach directed by the professor. In reality, lectures were not a predominant pedagogical tool, as less than 33 percent of class time was devoted to lectures, compared to 40 percent for team/individual meetings and 26 percent for other strategies. Three of every four teachers surveyed use at least one textbook, with the most widely used offerings being Robert Kendall's *Public Relations Campaign Strategies* (25 percent) and Jerry Hendrix's *Public Relations Cases* (14 percent).

While textbooks offer insight, research tips and comparative case studies, the campaigns course should be designed to immerse students into real-world strategy and planning. A promising finding is that 92 percent of campaigns students work with actual clients. About half of the students work with case studies, and less than one-fourth work with hypothetical clients.

Interestingly, of those schools which take on actual clients, only about 11 percent are financially compensated for their services, even though 96 percent of those who accept payments reported that "pay has never posed a problem." Correspondingly, two-thirds of the "average client mix" is for non-profit agencies, followed by corporate (17 percent) and government (10 percent). *Only about one percent of campaign clients are PR agencies*, which could be a lost opportunity for students to work (pro bono or paid) directly with the agency's clients and with agency account teams.

Theory/Research Elements

While 78 percent of respondents required outside readings, only one-third of all teachers required readings on mass communication theory, which is considered a crucial element of excellent public relations. A laudable note is that 88 percent of respondents require a research element in the campaigns course. Respondents also resoundingly (96 percent) stated that students are required to develop a strategic plan, and three-fourths of professors require documentation of survey results in the final plan.

Still, data garnered by students may suffer from a lack of substantive, quantitative methodology. Table 1 presents results of a rank ordering of eight campaigns research techniques. Two qualitative research methods -- the conducting of focus groups (first) and in-depth interviews (third) -- ranked as two of the three most widely used forms of survey research. The preference for qualitative methods probably reflects a tendency for untrained researchers to seek direct, face-to-face findings in a timely fashion.

(INSERT TABLE 1 HERE)

Table 2 shows that respondents generally required both primary and secondary research as components of the final plan, and every teacher surveyed required a situation analysis. More than 97 percent of campaigns students were also required to list major objectives and to list relevant publics, with 84 percent of plans revolving around a central theme or message.

These findings are fairly predictable and essential components of campaign plans. But they don't answer the client's two most pressing questions. "How much is this plan going to cost me?" and "What timeframe am I looking at?" Campaign teachers seem to be

addressing these needs, as 75 percent of the respondents require an operating budget, with 71 percent requiring a Gantt chart (timetable). Still, if public relations practitioners aim to become a part of the dominant coalition, they must *all* be privy to financial statements and organizational planbooks.

The biggest anomaly of this study may be the unexpected inverse relationship between agency setup and a plan requirement for billable hours. About 54 percent of the teachers utilized an agency-style setup with account teams, yet only 17 percent implemented a billable-hours system, which is the predominant measure of practitioner work documentation.

Furthermore, only 49 percent of students were required to submit research appendixes, a critical supplemental plan tool which can be referenced for phone/fax numbers and addresses as well as data tables. Nearly 83 percent of final plans required some form of collateral materials, however.

Audits for the organization (36 percent of all campaign plans), communication (45 percent), and plan/public relations (45 percent) are noticeably lacking in student research plans. *Social responsibility audits especially receive lip service, with just 16 percent of respondents requiring the students to explain to the client "why we ought to," rather than just "how to."*

(INSERT TABLE 2 HERE)

Management and the "Student-Client Dynamic"

According to the survey, nearly all professors (93 percent) encourage formal client feedback, and their feedback is actually reflected in the final course grade 58 percent of the time. In addition, more than half (51 percent) of all teams are in competition to present a winning plan to a particular client.

While research elements form the core of the final plan book or packet, it is oftentimes the formal oral presentation that ultimately lands, or alienates, the client. Only three percent of campaigns classes do not require a presentation element. Exactly half of the presentations are held in front of the professor, the client and the class members, with 19 percent of teams presenting to professor and client only.

And, while two-thirds of campaigns classes emphasize the team approach, the survey denoted that 94 percent of all presenters were graded by individual performance, in addition to team performance. When the grading focus lies solely on campaign performance, the student must be judged on a subjective basis. Students are evaluated by professors about three times per term on average; usually, both teams and individuals are evaluated. Peer evaluations -- about one per term on average -- are also common (73 percent), and, more often than not (60 percent), are reflected in the student's final grade.

Finally, since research and strategic planning is very labor-intensive...it is somewhat surprising that many professors require examinations (61 percent) and term papers (30 percent) in addition to the final plan. The data shows that research suffers from this division of labor; only an average of 22 percent of the campaigns course is devoted to research.

Insights and Innovations

From 24 syllabi sent by campaigns professors -- in addition to various comments on the questionnaires themselves -- we discovered several innovative teaching strategies:

Students: Preparation, Motivation and Accountability

* At the University of North Florida, campaigns classes spend one or two days at a local outdoor adventure course for "team building, group problem solving and consensus building." This is conducted with highly trained facilitators and, according to the respondent, "has proved to be an outstanding teaching tool."

* At Kent University, one or two class members are assigned to lead 20-minute discussions each week. In addition, a panel of Kent journalism/mass communication graduates visit the class to provide instruction and ideas on creating portfolio messages.

* Several respondents noted that students now form their own teams, after previous problems from random selection by the professor. "They seem to feel more accountable and personally responsible for having selected someone who hasn't fulfilled their expectations," one professor stated.

* Students not pulling their weight can be "fired" at Buffalo State College and Georgia State University, among many others. At Buffalo State, students (it's happened two or three times in the last 10 years) must drop the course and retake it at another time because no other team will take a fired student. At Georgia State, the student has one week to "shape up"...there's never been a member "fired" in 16 years.

Client Interaction

* At Central Oklahoma, two working professionals from PRSA join the instructor,

client and an "academic judge" for the final presentation.

- * At the University of Alabama, the client evaluates the team publicly, so that the students "get a feel for what it takes to make money."

- * At the University of Georgia, while student teams are asked to formulate a comprehensive plan with an actual client, they also have the option to perform 30-40 hours of outside client service (to receive a higher letter grade) in a 10-week quarter. A number of UGA students have continued to work (often for a fee) for their clients following the quarter.

Theory/Outside Readings

- * Mirroring the overall lack of theoretical emphasis among respondents, few syllabi or questionnaires addressed theory in any detail. At the University of Memphis, students "should apply social science and communication theory to solve problems, and also apply theory in supporting organizational objectives."

- * At Nicholls State University, students should incorporate "relevant theories into a particular campaign, such as relativism or agenda setting, or Burke's identification theory."

- * A common theme is echoed at Ball State University, which states that *prerequisite courses* are designed to introduce theory to students. The campaigns course are supposed to "remind students of the value of the theories and to aid them in recognizing applications."

- * At Kent University, students begin most meetings (2.5 hours each) with a 30-minute discussion of current issues featured in "PR Reporter."

The Future of PR Campaigns Education?

* At Louisiana State University, students are divided into pairs and provided a data set, using the instructor's SPSS software...each pair analyzes data and writes a report about the results. In addition, graduate students are responsible for presenting a workshop for undergraduates on how to use presentation software (either Lotus or PowerPoint).

* Students at the University of Alabama are required to submit camera-ready artwork as a plan component. At UA, the Management By Objectives (MBO) approach is emphasized, with each group responsible for listing at least eight objectives. Groups are given 20 hours to accomplish each objective (160 total hours), as well as another 80 hours for meetings, final reports and other administrative tasks.

* Some schools occasionally use an integrated approach. At Buffalo State, the course is called Campaigns in Public Relations and Advertising, while the University of Kansas occasionally joins the PR and advertising campaigns class together to conduct an Integrated Marketing and Communication (IMC) campaign on behalf of major corporations. "The logistics of bringing two classes together are difficult, but definitely worth it...too many ad classes lack knowledge of PR, and vice versa."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Campaigns professors wear many hats: lecturer, adviser, coach, and -- to a lesser degree -- coordinator. Similarly, the campaigns course takes many forms across the country, though often the forms are variations on themes. One theme is management by objectives, as evidenced in the campaign plan components that virtually all professors require. And the importance of research is quite evident, though the kind of research required is wide ranging.

We find ourselves somewhat concerned about how well the campaigns course, widely treated as a capstone course in a professional major, is preparing students for the imminent world-of-work. We note that only about half of respondents set up their course with an agency structure. The account team will play a role in the professional life of most majors in public relations. Many will work at some time in their career in an agency, while others will have occasion to work with agency account teams from the client perspective. The dynamics of a team and the interaction of that team with a real client are invaluable in our opinion; agency structure should be more widely adopted in the course.

The push to make public relations more accountable through measureable objectives and itemized invoices of professional fees are important to moving the profession forward. It is problematic that about half of faculty surveyed use the agency system, but only 17 percent of respondents require billable hours be submitted. Considering that some corporations also require hours be tracked and even billed as cross-charges, this indifference to a major reality of public relations -- the time sheet -- should be addressed.

Accountability to upper management and to overall organizational objectives are keystones of professional or excellent public relations. Several disturbing findings suggest that students are not being introduced to disciplined practices that enhance accountability. First, when plans do include ways to be held to some standard or measure of performance, accountability is hampered. Given the propensity found in our survey data for qualitative research methods in the course, we must question how this

will mesh with the worldview of analytical, MBA-types who oversee the public relations function.

Qualitative methods are excellent tools for developing *verstehen*, for understanding a situation or a public. They provide rich description and insight and offer a fine method for testing messages. But they do not lend themselves to evaluation of performance and they may be abused when generalizations or percentage breakdowns are derived from them. We would like to see more emphasis put upon survey and experimental methods in the campaigns course.

Clients almost always want to know how much it will cost and how long it will take to implement a plan. And yet one quarter of respondents do not require a budget as part of the plan. About one in three do not require a timeline or Gantt chart. In our experience, indifference to the client's pocketbook and calendar seriously damage credibility of public relations as a management function and invite the dominant coalition to find someone else who will manage the activity. In terms of accountability, the phrases "On time" and "On Budget" will probably do more to earn public relations a place in the CEO huddle than will lofty offerings of strategy or well-executed production of materials.

Finally, accountability is enhanced within the course experience itself by requiring that all clients make at least a nominal payment. Both the students and professor feel a stronger need to succeed with the client by providing excellent work. Perhaps more importantly, clients are more engaged in obtaining good value from the account team in the interests of even a nominal investment of \$100 to \$200. This covers incidental costs to

students who are devoting hundreds of hours as a team. Reimbursement by receipt only adds another business-like element.

A surprising amount of time is devoted to lectures and outside readings, yet the data indicates that a theory element is virtually missing. Apparently the lectures are more process oriented, dealing with methods and techniques in this labor-intensive course. Possibly, campaign course requirements should include a prescription and guidelines for making the strategy component theory-based. Students would need help with this, but it might raise the sophistication of plans and practice in public relations to see a team allude to the elaboration likelihood model, for example, as the rationale for a proposed element of the plan. In cross-listed courses, a graduate student could take the lead in this task.

Grading is a challenge in most campaigns courses. Teams are often used and individual performance within a team is hard to assess. There are a number of innovative methods for assigning grades that appealed to us. A number of schools ask students to perform outside client service in addition to a comprehensive plan to an individual client. One respondent required camera-ready artwork as part of the final proposal. One quote from the surveys described what many campaign teachers believe: "Since we essentially function as an agency, you might think of your final grade as your paycheck...the amount you will be paid will be based on your contribution in all relevant areas of the project and your demonstrated professionalism."

We wonder about the role of the client in grading. While it may be good to obtain formal or informal feedback from a client, we doubt that direct input on grades should occur. From our perspective, we also believe that exams or term papers have no

place in a capstone course. Students earn the vast majority of their college credits in liberal arts courses. They have ample time to prove their ability to write exams and papers; we suggest that the campaigns course be focused on the intellectual abilities and skill sets of the profession and that more traditional classroom assignments draw time from that process.

And finally, what of the future of public relations campaigns? This particular study was sent to about 150 e-mail addresses, yet only 44 were returned online. In fact, 11 online surveys were printed and faxed to us. From our survey data, Internet research rated lowest among the seven listed options, a trend that we hope might change because of improved technology, the swiftness of transmission, and a substantial potential for cost savings, among others. As the acknowledge capstone course for public relations education, campaigns should take an active lead in preparing students for the real world, and the professors will be responsible for setting the tone.

Table 1

**RANK ORDERING OF DATA COLLECTION MODES
FOR RESEARCH COMPONENT OF CAMPAIGNS COURSE**

(Note: 1 is used "most often," 8 is "least often")

Mode of Data Collection	Mean Score
Focus groups	2.84
Personal/intercept surveys	2.92
Telephone surveys	3.30
In-depth interviews	3.47
Participant observation	4.43
Mail surveys	4.55
Internet surveys	5.15
Other modes	6.21

Table 2

REQUIRED COMPONENTS FOR CAMPAIGN PLANS

Required plan component	Mean percentage of respondents requiring component (*denotes more than 80 percent responding "yes")
Introduction	96*
Situation analysis	100*
Organizational audit	36
Communication audit	45
Public relations audit	45
Social responsibility audit	16
Secondary research/situation	77
Opportunity/goal statement	91*
Primary research/publics	84*
Secondary research/publics	77
Objectives	97*
Publics	97*
Central message/theme	84*
Strategies/tactics	96*
Gantt chart/timetable	71
Operating budget	75
Evaluation	91*
Research plan	72
Survey results	75
Contact lists/research appendix	49
Billable hours/account summaries	17
Collateral materials	83*
Other components	10

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